

## **ABSTRACT**

Title of Dissertation:           ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF A  
LEADERHSIP DEVELOPMENT TRAINING PROGRAM

Lisa Gaillard-Jones, Doctor of Education, 2014

Dissertation directed by:       Professor Carol S. Parham  
Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and  
Special Education

Research indicates that school leaders are crucial to improving instruction and raising student achievement (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). As such, educational reforms such as the *No Child Left Behind Act (2001)* and *Race to the Top (2009)* have sparked an accountability movement where principals are being held accountable for students' academic achievement and educational outcomes. The shift towards greater accountability has placed new attention on the ways principals are trained.

Researchers have noted that organized professional development programs have not adequately prepared school principals to meet the priority demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Murphy, 1994). Murphy (1994) stated, "Traditional preparation programs – usually pre-service programs based in colleges or universities, that awarded certification and advanced degrees - rarely concentrated on the leadership challenges that principals actually face in real schools" (p. 4). As a result, many school districts are seeking ways to develop leadership development training programs that will prepare principals for their job responsibilities as a school leader. In spite of the additional training principals receive, researchers suggests that there is an obvious gap between the readiness of administrators to be instructional leaders and the demands for accountability that school administrators face (Hale & Moorman, 2003).

This quantitative study examined elementary school principals' perceptions of their leadership development training program. Guided by four research questions, the study examined principals' perceptions of their overall training and how well their training prepared them to deal with school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement; to work with teachers and others to design and implement a system for continuous student achievement; and to provide necessary support to carry out sound school, curriculum, and instructional practices.

Data for this study was collected by way of survey responses from a total of 46 elementary school principals. The results from the study revealed that more than half (58.7%) of participants perceived their training as excellent. While principals' perceived that their training adequately prepared them to work collaboratively in teams, set clear visions and goals, and to use data to improve students achievement, many respondents reported a lack of training in being informed and focused on student achievement. Principals also suggested that they were not effectively trained in finding effective ways to obtain support from central office or community members.

ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF A LEADERHSIP DEVELOPMENT  
TRAINING PROGRAM

By

Lisa M. Gaillard-Jones

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Advisory Committee:

Dr. Carol Parham  
Dr. Dennis Kivlighan  
Dr. Helene Cohen  
Dr. Nelson McLeod  
Dr. Olivia Saracho

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I	Introduction to the Study.....	1
	Background.....	2
	The Importance of the Principal Training Program.....	3
	The Changing Role of the Principal.....	4
	Statement of the Problem.....	6
	Purpose of the Study.....	7
	Research Questions.....	8
	Significance of the Study.....	9
	Conceptual Framework.....	10
	Limitations of the Study.....	12
	Definitions.....	13
Chapter II	Review of Literature.....	16
	Introduction.....	16
	Importance of the Principal.....	17
	The Evolving Role of the Principal.....	20
	External and Internal Forces Affecting the Principalship.....	24
	Assessing the Effectiveness of School Principalship.....	25
	Principal Preparation Programs.....	27
	Concerns with Traditional Leadership Development.....	31
	Programs for Principals .....	31
	Standards for Principals.....	33
	The Professional Growth System of a Leadership.....	35
	Development Training Program .....	36
	Organization and Function of the Leadership Development Team.....	36
	The Process of the Leadership Development Program.....	41
	Summary of the Literature Review.....	42
Chapter III	Methodology .....	45

	Research Questions .....	45
	Research Design.....	46
	Instrumentation.....	46
	Location of Study & Participants.....	47
	Data Collection Procedures .....	48
	Analysis of Data .....	49
	Summary.....	49
Chapter IV	Findings.....	50
	Introduction.....	50
	Data Collection.....	51
	Demographics of Participants.....	53
	Survey Reliability.....	55
	Research Question #1.....	57
	Research Question #2.....	54
	Research Question #3.....	61
	Research Question #4.....	62
	Summary.....	63
Chapter V	Summary, Conclusion, Recommendations.....	64
	Research Questions.....	65
	Conclusions Based on Quantitative Results.....	67
	Recommendation for Practice.....	71
	Recommendation for Further Research.....	72
	Closing Summary.....	73
Appendix A	Survey Instrument.....	77
Appendix B	Original SREB Survey.....	89
Appendix C	Coding Process... ..	100
Appendix D	ISLCC Standards (1996).....	101
Appendix E	ISLCC Standards (2008) .....	106
	References.....	109



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

*“The true leader serves. Serves people. Serves their best interests, and in doing so will not always be popular, may not always impress. But because true leaders are motivated by loving concern rather than a desire for personal glory, they are willing to pay the price.”*

*– Eugen B. Habecker, Author*

If school districts intend to improve their schools, the needs of the school and students must be paramount – and the content of leadership development training programs should reflect that primacy. Aspiring principals will have a major impact in the development and shaping of the curricula and pedagogy in leadership development training programs within their school districts. Hale and Moorman (2003) suggest that many leadership preparation programs do not provide principals with the training necessary to be effective in their positions. There appears to be an obvious gap between the readiness of administrators to be instructional leaders and the demands for accountability that school administrators face (Hale & Moorman, 2003). The techniques that are employed within principal-preparation programs should be appropriate for producing graduates who have the cognitive skills along with the creativity that is necessary to become a school leader (Education Week, 2011). The Wallace Foundation (2012) asserts that school leaders can no longer function simply as building managers, tasked with adhering to district rules, carrying out regulations, and avoiding mistakes. School leaders have to be, or become, leaders of learning who can develop a team delivering effective instruction to students. Given the evolving roles of principals, principal-preparation programs should equip educational leaders with the skills to be successful in these positions.

All students and educators deserve an effective principal who is able to maximize student learning, build teams, colleagues, and represent their school among outside constituents. Principal preparation programs are commonly used to develop future principals' skills and strategies for their job responsibilities as a school leader. According to the Wallace Foundation, (2012) successful leadership and development programs should teach principals how to:

- Shape a vision of academic success for all students;
- Create a climate hospitable to education;
- Cultivate leadership in others;
- Improve instruction; and
- Manage people, data, and processes to foster school improvement (p. 4).

This research study examined elementary principals' perceptions of their leadership development training program in the Suburban West School District. This chapter includes an introduction to the study; the statement of the problem; the purpose of the study; definitions of important terms; the research methodology, conceptual framework, and limitations.

## **BACKGROUND**

The role of the principal is constantly changing. Due to the accountability movement and federal legislation such as *No Child Left Behind Act (2001)*, principals are focusing on their students' academic performance and assessment data. Principals are also focusing on instruction and the understanding of the core curriculum and its implementation (Butler, 2008). With these new demands placed on principals, it is important that leadership and development training programs are preparing principals for their job responsibilities.

Researchers have noted that organized professional development programs have not adequately prepared school principals to meet the priority demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Murphy, 1994). Murphy (1994) stated, “Traditional preparation programs – usually pre-service programs based in colleges or universities, that awarded certification and advanced degrees - rarely concentrated on the leadership challenges that principals actually face in real schools” (p. 4). As a result, many school districts are seeking ways to develop leadership development training programs that will prepare principals for their job responsibilities as a school leader. Principal leadership and development training programs should be a companion piece to existing college and university programs (SREB, 2007). Leadership development training programs will provide additional avenues that will allow school based programs to enhance the training and educational activities offered by principals. As a result of this need, many school systems have formed collaborative relationships with institutions of higher education to develop comprehensive programs that balance educational activities and on the job training. According to Bottoms (2001) this approach creates a “connection of new knowledge with real experiences in schools,” and helps to ensure that principals’ learning is “both practical and rooted in the latest research about high-achieving schools” (p. 20).

### *The Importance of Principal Training Programs*

The Association of Washington School Principals (2010) reported that, “All principals need district support for developing their skills and knowledge in each of the responsibility areas” (p.3). The support that school districts can provide can be employed through a leadership development training program. The support provided in a leadership development training program is characterized by the presentation of theory and practice with the scaffolding of various

experiences including the support of experienced mentors, opportunities to actively reflect on leadership experiences, and the ability to peer network (Peterson, 2001; NAELP, 2002).

Leadership development for principals has been identified as a priority by many state and local governments (Shelton, 2012). President Obama's initiative on education, which is known as *Race to the Top*, has a segment that specifically focuses on training for school principals. Training for school principals is categorized under School Improvement Programs for Education. The School Improvement Programs for Education are outlined according to the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) with funding for the program through the awarding of educational grants for leadership development programs for principals (Department of Education Appropriations Act, 2012).

### *The Changing Role of the Principal*

Research indicates that school leaders are crucial to improving instruction and raising student achievement among students from all population subgroups in order to produce graduates who are better trained and can adapt to an ever-changing workplace (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). However, the mounting demands on administrators have made their roles more complex than ever (CCSC, 2008). The Council of Chief State School Officers (2008), states that "Today's education leaders must not only manage school finances, keep the buses running on time, and make hiring decisions, but they must also be instructional leaders, data analysts, community relations officers, and change agents. [Additionally,] they have to be able to mobilize staff and employ all the tools in an expanded tool box" (p. 3).

Research on the features of exemplary principal preparation programs note that the role of the principal has changed during the past 20 years in a new era of leadership (Darling-Hammond,

2007; Jackson, 2001; Kelley, 2001; Young, 2002; Tucker, 2002). Therefore, many of the principal training programs today are based upon leadership theories that do not capture the full scope of principals' responsibilities. Sergiovanni (1992) maintains that the study of leadership has historically addressed only "levels of decision making [while] assessing the consequences of their variations for followers' satisfaction, individual compliance and performance, and organizational effectiveness" (p. 2). According to Williams-Boyd (2002), there is an addressing of form and process rather than substance and function; "it represents a managerial mode of top-down authority that replaces results with the 'right' methods" (p. 6).

In addition to the traditional elements of leadership including interpersonal relationships and management, the focus on the principal as an integral part of student achievement is also paramount. Research on effective school leadership has consistently stated how vital the role of the school principal is to student achievement (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Orr, 2007). In a report entitled, *"Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World: Lessons from Exemplary Leadership Development Programs"*, Darling-Hammond and associates (2007) claim that "principals have a huge effect on student achievement and one of the steps for the effect of this achievement is that each element of the [leadership] preparation program has and meets quality standards" (p. 15).

Many studies (Darling-Hammond et al. 2007; Haynes, 2007; Leithwood et al. 2004; National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2008; Shelton, 2012; Simkin et al. 2010; Southern Regional Education Board, 2008 & 2009; The Wallace Foundation, 2008) have noted that a strong leadership preparation program leads to an instructionally strong leader who can improve student achievement. Understanding the complexity of the principal's role, some school districts have found it most effective to develop their own training program for principals

(Hammond, 2007). These programs extend the acquisition of theory to practice from a classroom perspective, practicum experiences, and training (Gall, 2007). Therefore, there is a growing emphasis on principal preparation programs to prepare principals for a growing range of demands and expectations in their roles.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Over time expectations for student learning and school management have changed to include a wider range of expertise (DiPaola & Forsyth, 2011). Given the increased emphasis on academic achievement and the principal as an instructional leader, there is a need to study the structure and the impact of leadership training programs for principals. Authors DiPaola and Forsyth (2011) acknowledge that “school leaders are called on to design and lead innovative organizations that support student learning of core subjects, facilitate development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and meet a host of other expectations” (p. 163). Therefore, the type of leadership needed to be successful as a principal has also changed (SREB, 2009). Additionally, there is some variation in principal roles and responsibilities, depending upon the level of school they lead. Elementary school education provides students with the foundational skills essential to succeed in future grades. Therefore, developing a greater understanding of the needs of principal leadership programs at this level may have a long-lasting impact on student success.

Aside from the need for skill development for a changing principal role, many individuals who are qualified to become principals do not enlist themselves in the recruitment pool. Although 47% of the nation's teachers have master's degrees, including a number in administration, many choose not to consider principalships (Groff, 2001). Thus, an additional challenge is to persuade and empower those who are qualified to be principals to pursue the position. A high-quality

leadership development training program that enables principals to become instructional leaders and manage the demands for accountability may empower more qualified individuals to pursue principalships.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine elementary school principals' perceptions of a Leadership Development Training Program in a suburban school district in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States - Suburban West School District. This study employed a quantitative methodology in order to show the elementary principals' perceptions of their district's leadership development training program. Quantitative findings were based on a survey which measure principals' perceptions of their preparation.

Leadership development training programs can provide the supplemental training and skills necessary for principals to employ as instructional leaders. The leadership practices a principal employs are an integral part of a school focusing on student achievement. Understanding leadership practices that are used by principals as instructional leaders and the effect of these practices is vital for the academic achievement of students. It creates a knowledge base that will enhance the understanding of leadership behaviors and experiences that will potentially increase student achievement and advance our efforts toward federal, state, and local accountability efforts.

The researcher used Glass' (2003) theoretical framework regarding the three competencies that are critical for effective principals (e. g. comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement; the ability to work with teachers and others to design and implement a system of continuous student achievement; the ability to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound curriculum and instructional practices) as lenses

through which to view the principals' leadership. Glass' pedagogy is discussed more fully within the Conceptual Framework section.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study examined the perceptions of elementary school principals who have completed the district's Elementary Leadership Development Training Program designed to prepare them for the role of becoming an elementary principal. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to deal with school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement?
2. What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to work with teachers and others to design and implement a system for continuous student achievement?
3. What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum, and instructional practices?
4. What are elementary school principals' overall perceptions of their leadership development training program?



## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study investigated elementary school principals' perceptions of Suburban West School District's Elementary Leadership Development Training Program. Currently, there is limited research about school leadership training programs at the district level. Insights from this study could lead to ideas for modifications and/or enhancements to the existing elementary leadership development training program in order to better meet the needs of school principals in preparing for their leadership responsibilities.

School district leaders across the country are investigating programs that will assist them in preparing school principals for their leadership responsibilities (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). The creation of leadership development programs has been identified as a way to increase the knowledge base of principal candidates (Joseph, 2009; Miracle, 2006; Morrison, 2005). This quantitative study provides insight into the current implementation of one school district's leadership development training program for elementary school principals.

Support for leadership development training programs extends beyond the district level. The Institute of Educational Leadership (2000) reported that state policymakers have backed the development of leadership development training programs for K-12 administrators. Data from leadership program evaluations can assist state agencies with the ongoing development of policies and funding for school districts attempting to address the need for leadership development training programs within local jurisdictions.

University-based leadership development programs may also gain valuable insight from this study. University based leadership development programs are more frequently partnering with

local school districts to train principal candidates. Through the exploration of one school district's implementation of an elementary leadership development training program this study could assist university based programs and school districts understand that collaboration amongst their programs could be vital to the development and sustainability of a leadership development training program.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

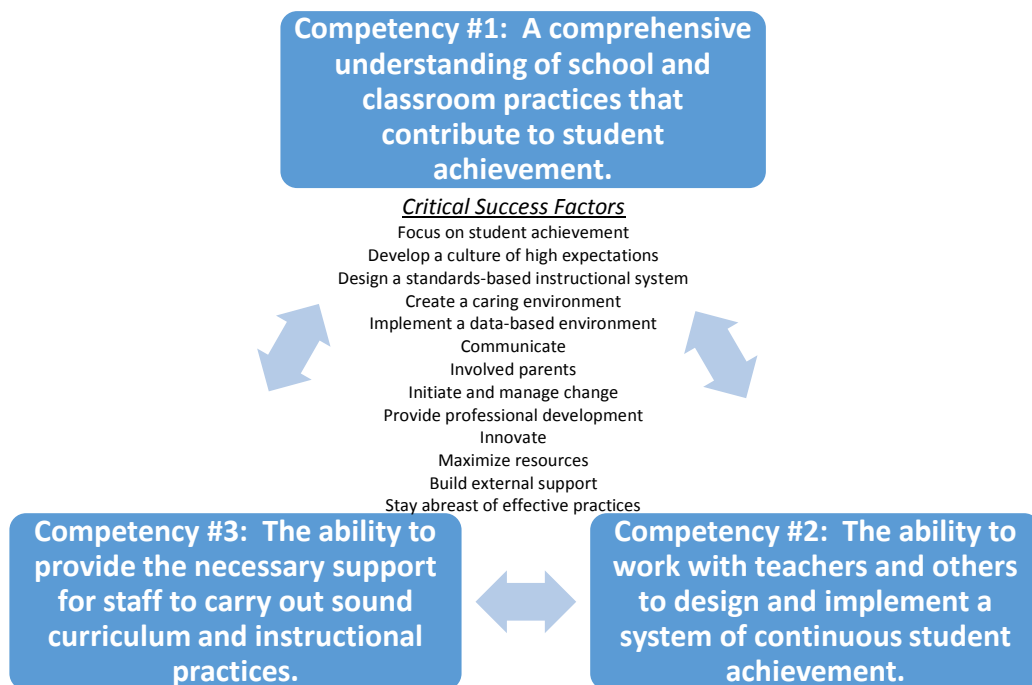
This study sought to understand elementary school principals' perceptions of a Leadership Development Training Program, as it pertains to being prepared for assuming the job of elementary school principal. The study was guided by the theoretical framework of Glass (2003). Glass' framework is the result of a leadership initiative that examined research regarding leadership development. The survey instrument was based on themes from the framework. The theoretical framework was also to be used to analyze findings from this study.

The conceptual framework suggests that there are quality "hands-on" experiences that help prepare a principal to lead the work of school improvement towards the goal of student achievement. This leadership paradigm is the result of studies conducted on leadership initiatives from the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). SREB solicited the assistance of Thomas Glass to answer important questions about the alignment of principal internships with the job requirements of today's principals. As a researcher and consultant for over twenty-five years, Glass worked with a wide range of school districts, focusing on leadership preparation.

Glass (2003) developed a conceptual framework identifying effective practical experiences and leadership behaviors that principals should possess. This principal leadership model was established through a survey of educational leadership programs used across 156 institutions of

higher education that offered principal preparation programs during 2003. The data revealed that most leadership programs in the SREB region were not providing quality hands-on experiences that prepared principals for their essential work of school improvement (Glass, 2003). The survey data indicated that internship programs provided a moderate level of practice and understanding of skills that enabled principals to successfully perform their job duties. Specifically, Glass' framework identified three competencies that an effective principal should possess: (1) a comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement; (2) the ability to work with teachers and others to design and implement a system for continuous student achievement; and (3) the ability to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum, and instructional practices.

**Figure 1: Concept Map of Thomas Glass' Framework**



## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study was limited to a single school system and may not be suitable for generalization to school systems with varying leadership needs. The data collected in this study was based on the perceptions of the participants; therefore there may be other perspectives and experiences of principals that are not captured in this work. The data of this study was also limited to the people who were admitted into the Leadership Development Training Program after successful completion of their assistant principal training modules I & II and who became elementary school principals.

Participants' responses may also vary depending on the years in which they participated in the Leadership Development Program. Beginning in 2005, the Suburban West School District made significant changes to its elementary leadership development training program. From this point on the county adopted a structured and sequential Leadership Development Program (LDP) that includes five levels of training and support: ASA, AP1, AP2, Principal Intern, and first-year Principal. While there is evidence that principals in the 2005-2014 have received the same type of training, little can be said of principals who were trained under earlier programs. Since a total of 14 respondents (30%) participated in earlier cohorts it is possible that they received an entirely different training which may not have focused on the same key areas. In addition, given the time span between this study and the time at which principals were trained, the participants from the earlier cohorts may not remember as much about the Elementary Leadership Development Training Program as more recent. Consequently, responses are dependent upon the principals' memories.

## DEFINITIONS

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study:

1. Cohort: A group of Assistant Principals who progress through the training program together in order to share their experiences of the program.
2. Leadership Development Program: The program that was designed, implemented, and currently in operation within a Mid-Atlantic school district to develop Adaptive Leaders who are reflective in their practices.
3. Leadership Development-Training Program: The leadership development- training program is a three year training program designed to prepare aspiring administrators to the appointment of an Elementary School Principal. The training development is designed to occur within three specific areas of the program: on-the-job experiences, the use of training sessions, and the use of developmental team meetings.
4. Practicum Experience: A Practicum Experience allows an individual to exercise the on-the job experiences and training received as an Assistant Principal and employing these skills for a specific period of time as the Elementary School Principal.
5. Principal: The Principal is the primary trainer for a Principal Intern. The Principal is in charge of the instructional program and management of the elementary school. The Principal provides mentoring to the Principal Intern. The Principal consults with the Principal Intern with his or her progress on Administrative and Supervisory Professional Growth Standards for focus and professional development of the Principal Intern.

6.     *Principal Intern:* An Assistant Principal who is in their third phase of a rigorous three-year program designed to prepare selected staff for appointment as an Elementary Principal.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of elementary school principals as it relates to their district's leadership development training program. The leadership development program was designed to prepare principals for their job responsibilities and to lead their schools in developing 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. The conceptual framework of this study is rooted in the perspective that the leadership behaviors and practices of an elementary school principal influences the entire school community (Glass, 2003). As cited in Canto and Stronge (2006) Langer et al. suggests that principals must engage in a "juggling act that results in efforts to satisfy demands from both internal and external stakeholders with the performance of schools" (p. 221). Principals must also remain engaged in the crucial responsibilities of academic leadership. Schools serve a primary function of facilitating teaching and learning and all other activities are secondary to these basic goals (Hoy & Hoy, 2006). Therefore, with these noted demands, school districts must aim to recruit, train, and retain "highly qualified" individuals for the role of elementary school principal in order to fulfill the basic need of schooling. Although measures of "highly qualified" principals are clearly defined based on education and experience, there has been much less research centered on training programs at the district level, and the ways in which these programs prepare principals for their roles. This quantitative study provides a deeper understanding of the leadership behaviors and practices of individuals who have completed a leadership development training program and assumed the role of principal.

### *Importance of the Principal*

Sergiovanni (1992) notes that the study of [principal] leadership has historically addressed only “levels of decision making, assessing the consequences of their variations for followers’ satisfaction, individual compliance and performance, and organizational effectiveness” (p. 2). This approach to leadership emphasizes the completing of forms and daily processes as top priority rather than substance and functions, which are representative of a top-down mode of authority (Sergiovanni 1992). The top down model was viewed as three pronged to include: political activist, manager, and instructional leader. With the increased emphasis on accountability for student achievement and collaborative decision making, the principal’s role has evolved to include new responsibilities and required skills (Sergiovanni, 2007). Sergiovanni (2007) attributes this change to a reduction in school funding.

school funding not keeping pace with budgetary demands; because over one third of the current teaching population will retire in the next five years; and because the student population is increasing from families of lower socioeconomic levels who speak English as a second language, educational leadership has begun to shift from top down to the more linear community oriented model (Sergiovanni, 2007, pgs. 6-7).

However, in his linear community model, Sergiovanni asserts that school leadership is based upon three main premises:

(1) “Shared governance is a bridging of three separate dimensions of responsibility and opportunity, (2) Systems thinking is the ability to perceive the ‘hidden dynamics of complex systems, and to find leverage’ (Senge, 2012), (3) New era leadership uses the language of engagement, the ability to perceive and frame difficult problems and then to mobilize individuals and constituent groups toward a common action.”



Therefore, this linear community model emphasizes partnerships in the leadership of schools.

In contrast, Williams-Boyd (2002) attributed this shift by Sergiovanni (2007) to three main reasons:

(1) School funding's inability to keep up with budgetary commands, (2) the realization that one-third of the teaching population is scheduled to retire in 5 years, (3) the student population in which English is the second language, the focus of educational leadership has begun to shift from top-down mode to a more linear community model. (p.6)

Additionally, in this new era of thinking, principals are challenged with team building, and sustaining and encouraging capacity building of others. This capacity building is focused on collaborative-shaped goals, outcomes, and values within the leadership of schools (Williams-Boyd, 2002). The leadership of schools with regard to traditional ideas and belief systems support that there is a clear linkage between principal leadership and the effectiveness of a schools. This effectiveness of schools was mentioned in a Federal Legislative Act that was instituted by President Barack Obama in November of 2012 titled, *Barack Obama on Education*. This Legislative Act called for school improvement and the capacity building of all district level staff that will support academic achievement of students.

Investments in educational leadership have taken a prominent role in other recent legislation. Specifically, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), is an education reform that supports the investment within innovative states that are committed to leading efforts to improve students' academic outcomes. The priorities of this legislation include long term gains in schools and building school system capacity in order to increase the productivity

and effectiveness of schools. Additionally, the ARRA led to the creation \$4.35 Billion dollar competitive grant program to encourage and reward states for creating conditions; reforms; and student outcomes supporting substantial gains in achievement. These gains in achievement involve stakeholders at all levels of the school system especially at the school level. The ARRA defines the significant entities that support student achievement, and one of the most important entities mentioned is that of the “Effective Principal.”

The Effective Principal is defined as an improver of the achievement for all students and for specific groups: economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and students with Limited English Proficiency. The academic goal for the students is to make academic progress by at least one year’s growth (AARA, 2009). According to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009), this one year’s growth is measured by a student’s score on the state’s assessments under the Elementary and Secondary Act and other measures of student learning within tested grades and subjects. For non-tested grades and subjects, alternative measures of student learning and performance determine their academic progress. For them, the academic progress may include pre-tests and end-of-course test, student performance on English Language Proficiency assessment, and other measures of student achievement that can be compared across classrooms (Race to the Top, 2009). These goals are a “Call to Action” by President Obama. President Obama stated that, “It’s time to stop just talking about education reform and start actually doing it. It’s time to make education America’s national mission.” (President Barack Obama, November 4, 2009).

This recent national emphasis on leadership to improve student outcomes reflects a much broader area of research. The concept of leadership has its early origins, yet remains relevant in contemporary contexts (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Ackerman & Masline-Ostrowski

(2002) argue that today in the USA, “schools and school leaders are caught in a strong riptide...school leaders and those aspiring to leadership persistently cite job-related stress and time fragmentation, the growing pressure of high-stakes testing and accountability, and the social problems that schools are assuming in trying to instruct students as major factors influencing their standing...” (p. 5). Court (2002) cites the identification of four different types of leadership factors that influence the leadership standing of a principal within a school. The four different types of leadership factors according to the Court are: “job-shared [duties] as two people alternating the work schedule in order to perform the duties of the job, the ability to have time off to parent, the ability to be involved in community commitments, and the ability to study for ones’ own professional development (Court, 2002).

Student success is achieved by the work of the principal in his or her multifaceted, hectic role that is fraught and filled with uncertainties. Given the ongoing pressures for accountability, the work that the principal does as an instructional leader shifts constantly to ensure student results (Zepeda, 2013). As a result, it is important to examine the principal’s role in order to understand the type of training that would enable individuals to be effective in this work.

### *The Evolving Role of the Principal*

The nature of the school principal’s role of being an effective instructional leader in order to improve student achievement has been an area of study for more than a decade (The Wallace Foundation, 2000). The Wallace Foundation has supported efforts to improve leadership in public schools by funding projects that stem throughout 28 states and the school districts within them. As a result, there have been over 70 research reports regarding school leadership. The studies of school leadership have focused on the school principal’s role, how the principal can be effective

in that role, and how the effectiveness leads to increased student achievement with regard to grade level indicators.

The role of a school principal is multi-faceted and there are multiple leadership behaviors that a principal performs on a daily basis. In 1996 The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) established five key practices that a principal performs that demonstrates their competencies of being an effective leader. These competencies can be summarized as:

1. The shaping of a vision of academic success for all students.
2. The creating of a climate hospitable to education.
3. The cultivating of leadership in others.
4. The improving of instruction.
5. The managing of people, data, and processes to foster school improvement (ISLCC Standards, 1996) (see Appendix).

These competencies have been evolving over time to incorporate federal efforts such as Race to the Top (2009), which emphasizes the importance of effective principals with regards to boosting teaching and learning. However, the fundamental practices remain consistent and could serve as a foundation for principal training programs.

Theoreticians and analysts repeatedly dissected the job of school principal and its place in the larger social and educational context, urging principals in one decade to be “bureaucratic executives” followed ten years later by referring to principals as “humanistic facilitators and instructional leaders” (Beck and Murphy, 1993). Authors Leithwood and Duke (1999) identified six distinct conceptions of leadership:

Leadership is *instructional* (influencing the work of teachers in a way that will improve student achievement), *transformational* (increasing the commitment and capacities of

school staff); *moral* (influencing others by appealing to notions of right and wrong), *participative* (involving other members of the school community); *managerial* (operating the school efficiently); and *contingent* (adapting their behavior to fit the situation). (pp 45-72)

Leithwood and Duke (1999) suggested that each conception reflects a different emphasis that should be viewed in terms of the connections among leaders, followers, organizations, and the outside environment. In light of the growth of standards-based accountability during the decade of the 1990's and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, discussions about the role of the principal have been dominated by discussions of the principal's role in creating an environment that focuses on student learning (Beck & Murphy, 1993; Lashway, 2003; Leithwood & Duke, 1999). The Institute for Educational Leadership (2000) further explains that principals must know academic content and pedagogical techniques. They must work with teachers to strengthen skills. They must also collect data in ways that promote excellence while rallying students, teachers, parents, local health, and family services agencies, youth development groups, local businesses, and other community residents and partners around the common goal of raising student performance. Finally, they must have the leadership skills and knowledge to exercise the autonomy and authority to pursue these strategies.

Leithwood & Riehl (2003) note that the current education-reform environment may require principals to perform several roles that are specifically related to accountability. The roles are:

- Creating and sustaining a competitive school (market accountability)
- Empowering others to make significant decisions (decentralization accountability)
- Providing instructional leadership (professional accountability)

- Developing and executing strategic plans (management accountability), and the proactive promoting of the school for its quality, equity, and social justice (Leithwood & Riehl (2003).

Technical management skills are another desirable area of expertise for principals. Technical management is a term that is recognized by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). The NAESP notes that effective principals are able to master first and then transcend the technical aspects of management so that they can lead schools in a way that places student and adult learning at the center, set high expectations and standards for academics and social development of all students and the performance of adults, demand content and instruction that ensures student achievement based on academic standards, create a culture of continuous learning for adults tied to student learning and other school goals, use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools to assess, identify, and apply instructional improvement, and actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success (n.p.).

Technical management skills support good leadership and enable principals to navigate the complexities of practicing leadership (Northhouse, 2013). A principal's technical management skills ensure that effective management of people and processes, including logistics and daily operations, is modeled on a regular basis. Principals with technical management skills are also able to provide guidance to others in their school tasked with managing processes.

There have also been studies that provide an empirical link between school leadership and improved student achievement (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstron, Anderson, 2010; Murphy 1994). These empirical studies concluded that the principal is responsible for creating conditions that affect student learning in schools (ISLCC Standards, 2008) (see Appendix) and leading by

supporting teacher success, managing reform, and extending the school community (Murphy, 1994).

The body of literature describing the changing role of the principal shows the complexity and challenges that a principal confronts daily. The expectations with regard to management have remained the same while the principal's role has expanded to include being an instructional leader, site-based manager, and being accountable for school results. Therefore, the perceived workload may discourage talented educators from accepting the leadership challenge of principalships, and diminishing the pool of qualified candidates (Pounder & Merrill, 2001).

### *External and Internal Forces Affecting the Principalship*

The day-to-day operations of schools require principals to multi-task many efforts to meet the constant demands of schools from internal and external stakeholders (Cantano & Stronge, 2006). These stakeholders range from federal agencies to local, district-level constituents including community members, school boards, teachers, and the parent community. All of these stakeholders influence and scrutinize the performance of schools (Langer & Boris-Schaefer, 2003; Thomas, Grisby, Miller & Scully 2003; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). This accountability then forces school principals to be aware and responsive to the various demands of a wide range of stakeholders.

School principals are expected to be a combination of educational leader, community pillar, role model, surrogate parent, and a moral agent as they respond to all of their school's constituents. The nature of schooling has changed and must continually change in order to accommodate the new conceptualizations of what schools ought to be. In other words, school principals must work towards transforming all the members of a school organization into a reconstructed teaching and learning agency to fulfill the needs of the various communities. Educational leadership, in all its

manifestations, is evolving to meet with the changes to the educational environment brought on by escalating external pressures from various sectors (Hill, 2010).

### *Assessing the Effectiveness of School Principals*

Research and practice confirm that there is a slim chance of creating and sustaining high-quality environments without a skilled and committed leader to help shape teaching and learning (Wallace Foundation, 2009). Therefore as pressure increases to have all students succeed as learners, there is a broad acceptance that educational leaders need to be more than managers; they must also be instructional leaders.

The instructional leader must face the challenges of the current “achievement gap” and the Federal No Child Left Behind Law (NCLB) that focuses on instructional leadership that is essential to teaching and learning. According to the Wallace Foundation (2009), more than 40 states have adopted the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLCC) as the basis for assessing leaders, improving their performance, and redesigning the training program that prepares them for their jobs. Using an assessment instrument that is currently in use in 44 districts and states, the Wallace Foundation found that nearly half fail to give leaders clear feedback on what they could be doing more or better to improve teaching and learning). “There are often inconsistent connections between evaluation processes and the professional development and mentoring necessary to help leaders improve once weaknesses are identified” (Wallace Foundation, 2009, p. 2).

As a result of this data the Wallace Foundation commissioned a researcher by the name of Jennifer Gill to synthesize research about leadership development training programs. The data that Gill gathered suggested that principal training programs must be selective in the candidate selections, comprehensive in their training programs, and provide the new principals with



professional development and support beyond the training that was received in the graduate program (Gill, 2012). This training will then lead to an effective, efficient school principal.

The training that is necessary for a school principal to be an effective leader should incorporate techniques that are considered best practices within the field of educational administrative training programs (Chenoweth, Carr, & Ruhl, 2002). The concept of best practice comes from the fields of law and medicine and the implication of professional standards which are indicative of current research and offers the latest technology, procedures and knowledge base (Chenoweth, Carr, & Ruhl, 2002,). Best practice has evolved from focusing on a managerial philosophy to a philosophy that “communicates the importance of being clearly focused on the teaching and learning process and the success of all children (Carr, Chenowith, & Ruhl, 2003).

Researchers and educational experts have made recommendations regarding what constitutes best practices in education administration training (Bottom & O’Neill, 2001; Carr et al., 2003; Chenoweth et al., 2002; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2009; Jackson & Kelly, 2001; Litfin, 2007; Renihan & Phillips, 2006; Sorenson & Goldsmith, 2008;). The components of successful principal preparation programs include the following: (a) entrance requirements that have been aligned with the current demands of the principalship, (b) clear performance-based standards, (c) opportunities for differentiated instruction according to the need of the principal, (d) development and assessment of skills, (e) emphasis on reflective practice, (f) continuous program review with input from current practioners, (g) cohort groups of study, (h) substantive internship experiences (i) mentorship provided by experienced administrators, (j) partnership between universities and school districts in the selection and training of principal candidates, (k) emphasis on real-world training, and (l) the development of processes to recruit and train high-performing leaders. Based on theory, these recommendations are practical and not too complicated to implement. Yet, in

practice, there has to be a carefully designed principal preparation program that prepares principals for their job responsibilities.

### *Principal Preparation Programs*

Principal Preparation Programs have been examined with limited research regarding traditional preparation programs ( Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001; Daresh, 2006; Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Davis & Jazsar, 2005; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hale & Moorman, 2003; Hess & Kelly, 2007; Lashway, 2003; Levine, 2005; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006;; Vanderhaar, Munoz, Rodosky, 2007). The research regarding principal preparation programs largely focused on perceptions of participants in university-based programs and took place between 1998 and 2007. These programs represented collaborations between universities and school districts. More recently, the research on principal preparation programs focused on the curriculum, challenges, and leadership outcomes of the training programs (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Hess & Kelly, 2007; Lashway, 2003; Orr & Orpharious, 2011). The various programs range in delivery, therefore findings have been somewhat inconsistent. Furthermore, very few studies examined district-specific leadership training programs.

Hale & Moorman (2003) conducted an examination of the different forms of leadership in *Preparing School Principals: A National Perspective on Policy and Program Innovation*. This research was the result of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landmark report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, which forced the examination of school leadership and the need for quality principals who are prepared and able to provide the instructional leadership necessary to improve student achievement. The report focused on two areas: 1) the influence of state policies and programs

with regard to school leadership to include licensure, certification, and accreditation, and 2) the focus on administrator training and professional development. Within these two areas there is a national discussion about school leadership and principal preparation programs.

Additionally, the report presents approaches and practices that are being implemented across state systems, school districts, universities and colleges and provider organizations. The study yielded different areas of focus. The first area is the need for preparation programs that will equip school principals for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The next area is the need for school principals to have preparation programs that provide them with the skills to become leaders of student learning. Next, there is a need to recruit and prepare school principals for their job of improving student achievement. Finally, there is a need for colleges and universities to be more innovative in their principal preparation programs in order to produce exemplary instructional leaders.

Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, & Orr (2009) in conjunction with the Stanford School Leadership Study, the Finance Project, and WestEd conducted a major research effort commissioned by the Wallace Foundation. The study served to address the following: (1) high-quality teaching and learning for all students depend substantially on effective school leadership. Leadership that promotes and sustains learning gains for students, teachers, schools, and districts. (2) American schools are hindered in providing effective education for all students in part due to a lack of support for developing leadership. The study identified effective ways of developing strong school principals who are equipped to create effective learning environments for America's diverse student populations.

The Stanford Study examined eight highly advanced principal development programs that were exemplary. The study analyzed principal preparation and in-service effective leadership

practices; state, district, and institutional policies; and funding that support as well as constrained the programs. The findings of the study identified features of leadership development programs that were evident in their research that must also be included in preparation programs. The elements are:

- Research based content
- Curricular coherence
- Field based internships
- Problem-based learning strategies
- Cohort structures,
- Mentoring and coaching, and the collaboration between universities and school districts.

The elements listed were evident in the eight programs that were studied. There were other contributing factors in this literature regarding effective leadership development programs. These factors are: vigorous recruitment of high ability candidates, the financial support of internship programs and the support of the principal with district and/or state infrastructures. With the use of these elements, the eight programs produced school principals who were considered instructional leaders with an increase ability to advance student achievement.

The various studies consistently highlighted the need for strong training on instructional leadership and the significance of internship experiences within leadership development training programs. As a result of the different programs, the curriculum, the challenges, and leadership outcomes, the field of educational administration has explored research regarding the effective elements of a principal preparation program. A principal preparation program that does not follow

the antiquated techniques of the past but uses the past concerns of traditional preparation programs to enhance the current needs of what the leadership development program should address.

The current needs of a principal that should be addressed in a leadership development program were highlighted by the School Leadership Study: *Developing Successful Principals*. Understanding principal's current needs are the focus of this study: "How are successful leadership development programs designed?" This question relates to the study by providing insights into the perception of some principals who completed a leadership development program and are current principals. The study concluded that effective leadership development programs contained the following features:

Little discrepancy between guidelines for pre- and in-service programs. Evidence indicating that effective programs are research-based, have curricular coherence, provide experience in authentic contexts, use cohort groupings and mentors, and are structured to enable collaborative activities between the [leadership development] program and [the] school (Stanford Educational Leadership Institute, 2005, p. 2).

Effective school leadership is a major factor in high student achievement, yet additional research is required to understand how to best develop school leaders. There are three questions that are recurring in the leadership about what is effective leadership development. Question number one: "What knowledge and skills should be developed to create effective leaders?" The answering of this question derives from empirical literature that examines the structures, processes, and methods that are used to prepare prospective administrators and has a heavy reliance on self-reports, the perceptions of individuals along with personal testimonies ( Murphy & Vriesenga, 2004). Question number two: "What program features are essential in the development of effective school leaders? And what standards should institutions follow?" The school leadership study

answers this question by examining in-service and initial preparation programs for leadership and concluded that there is a mirroring on context in both deliveries with a focus on the use of coaching, mentoring, and authentic problem-based learning experiences. Question number three: “With a broad array of pre- and in-service programs, how can we identify effective program design?” The program design of effective leadership development programs has developed into four major types of principal preparation: university based, district initiated, third party, and stakeholder partnerships. In addition three new approaches to ongoing professional development have been used: (1) statewide leadership academies (e.g., North Carolina’s Principal Executive Program), (2) local professional development academies for teachers and principals (e.g. Greens Professional Development Academy, Jefferson County, KY, and (3) comprehensive professional development initiatives tied to school reform (e.g., The Wallace Foundation supported by LEAD districts).

### *Concerns with Traditional Leadership Development Programs for Principals*

The changing role of the principal has required a shift in thinking with regard to principal preparation programs. This shift in thinking focuses on the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century life of a principal and the work that requires principals to develop a deep understanding of how students learn and at what levels they need to learn (Fry, O’Neill, and Walker, 2007). Fry et al. (2007) report that schools “must have principals who can provide teachers with the leadership and support they need to help students gain the skills and knowledge now identified as important for success in a ‘flat’ world filled with uncertainty and constant change” (iii). Subsequently, principal preparation programs must support the development of skills needed in order to become effective principals. The first step toward meeting the needs of aspiring principals was the development of the ISLCC standards for principals (Tucker & Coddling, 2002). The next step for universities was

the incorporation of the ISLLC standards into their principal preparation programs, to analyze which course of study supports the skill development, and what courses would need to be added to the preparation programs by universities (McCarthy, 2002). This process required faculty leading principal preparation programs to analyze and rethink the learning paradigm with regard to the skills and knowledge base needed in order to fulfill the principal role effectively (Copeland, 2001).

Research that was conducted by Quinn (2005) notes that professors in higher education are often removed from schools and school systems, and may be unaware of the realities that their students will encounter as principals. Quinn (2005) recommends that faculty who train principals stay connected with practicing principals in order to continue to understand their needs and expectations. Furthermore, Senge (2000) stated that passive study does not allow for learning to occur. There is a need for dialogue with practicing principals in order support the professional development of aspiring principals. Principal training programs at the district level provide unique opportunities for aspiring principals to receive training from individuals who are closely connected with the districts in which they will work.

With traditional leadership programs there has been a tendency to use old approaches to address new problems (McCarthy, 2002). Leadership programs were often delivered in the same format year after year, for individuals preparing to lead in a variety of districts. The current challenge is to improve the delivery of information and the expectations of what needs to be learned in the leadership development programs to prepare leaders for a new era of learning. This new era of learning is characterized by leadership standards that are clear, concise, and detailed according to the needs of the principal.

### *Standards for Principals*

The principal's job responsibilities can be challenging and requires a wide array of leadership skills. The leadership skills that are required for the principal should be explicitly stated by the state regarding the expectations of the school leader (Fry et al 2007). As Fry notes, this is important since "leadership standards not only lay the foundation for principal preparation programs and principal evaluations; they make a powerful statement about what we want our schools to be and what we expect our school system...to accomplish (p. iv). School principals are being asked to ensure that all students have access to high-quality instruction and all educators are held accountable for student learning. The principal is expected to provide leadership towards staff development that will improve the rigor of instruction which ultimately raises the level of student achievement. "To cope with the environmental pressures and management imperatives principals face, more thought to a new paradigm of educational administration is needed today-one that emphasizes a better balance between a concern for performance and concern for people" (Usdan, 2002, p.293). As school leadership continues to evolve from mere operational management to that of greater instructional focus, the qualities that a principal should demonstrate has also evolved. Thus, "school leadership preparation programs have experienced higher levels of accountability as demanded from accreditation agencies, as well as by state departments of education" (Usdan, 2002). One method of developing the leadership skills necessary for aspiring school leaders for a productive school is through principal preparation programs.

New standards for the principal performance have emerged and reflect a new emphasis on the profession. "*The Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008*, is a widely recognized and referenced principal standards list" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). These standards set out to develop a powerful framework for redefining school leadership and to



connect that framework to strategies for improving educational leadership. The ISLLC Standards contain six domains for principal professional practice:

- Setting a widely shared vision for learning
- Developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth
- Ensuring effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment
- Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources
- Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner
- Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural context

Principal preparation programs should differ in order to meet the needs of individual school districts. Utilizing the ISLLC Standards as a knowledge base for any such program may provide the quality control necessary for the preparation programs. Currently, 43 states employ the standards completely or use them as a model for developing their own standards for selection, preparation, and of school leaders. “The authors of the standards believe their implementation is necessary to promote the success of every student. Implementing these performance expectations in graduate programs will ensure future leaders have the tools necessary to positively impact student learning prior to entering their leadership positions” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p.).

However, the simple use of the ISLLC Standards does not ensure that a school district has created a satisfactory principal preparation program. “Critics argue that ISLLC Standards are an

unrealistic set of expectations that are not inclusive of all the knowledge, skills, and practices needed by school leaders who are required to support the development of curriculum and instruction which will result in increased levels of student achievement” (Bell, 2005; Levine, 2005). Despite this fact the Standards are used to evaluate “at least 40% of all educational leadership preparation programs” (NPBEA, 2005, p. 1), and these Standards guide principal preparation program curriculum in the universities of more than half of states nationwide. Since the ISLLC Standards continue to influence the field of public school level administration, principal selection, evaluation, and professional development, “a clearer picture on how best to measure and evaluate the actual operationalization of these standards needs to be the focus of discussion by all those with a vested interest in developing and producing quality principals” (Babo, 2009, p. 12). A quality principal is developed when there is a Leadership Development Training Program that focuses intricately on the professional growth of the principal.

### *The Professional Growth System of a Leadership Development Training Program*

The school district in which this study was conducted has a Leadership Development Training Program that was created in 1995. This study sought to examine the elementary principals’ perception of that Leadership Development Training Program. The Elementary Leadership Development Training Program was developed to train and prepare principals at the elementary school level. The Elementary Principal Leadership Development Training Program has several requirements. The requirements begin prior to the candidate being accepted into the Leadership Development Program. A candidate has to be selected from a group of individuals who have expressed an interest in becoming a school-based administrator. The process by which a candidate is selected involves submitting required information to the Office of Human Resources

& Development to the Associate Superintendent for review. The requirements include: a resume, references, completion of Observation and Analysis of Teaching Course (OAT 1), a timed-writing sample, three to five years of successful teaching experience, and the completion of the Future Administrators Workshop Series. The requirements are assessed with a rubric. The rubric scores the items according to a point value for a maximum score of one hundred points. The minimum score that a candidate needs in order to meet the minimum requirements is a combined score of eighty-five points.

The candidates must submit a resume that is designed to provide a snapshot of how each candidate's educational background, certification, years of experience, work experiences, and professional development experiences relate to the ISLCC standards. Professional references are also provided for the candidate by current principals and/or supervisors who can verify the on-the-job experiences. The professional reference questionnaire has a list of professional characteristics that the candidate may possess and requires the reviewer to rate the candidate on each characteristic. The references that are also a part of the preliminary requirements are designed to show how the candidate collaborates with staff, students, and parents.

The Observation and Analysis of Teaching Course (OAT 1) is a course that is taken prior to requesting admittance to the Assistant Principal Pool. It is designed to train the candidate to recognize the characteristics of an effective and efficient learning environment for students and the behaviors that are employed in order to achieve this goal. The Observation and Analysis of Teaching Course encompass six sessions totaling thirty-nine hours. The course examines the individual's knowledge-base on teaching according to the school districts professional standards and the development of skills in communicating with teachers in a balanced way about their

teaching repertoire. The objectives of the course, according to Research for Better Teaching, Inc. (2003-2004, p. 3) are as follows:

1. Participants will acquire and use a common language and concept system to analyze teacher decision-making and its impact on student learning,
2. Participants will increase their ability to collect data about teaching, provide feedback and coaching that stimulates teacher thinking, and write about teaching with balance and substance, and
3. Participants will consider and experiment with strategies for building professional communities characterized by shared objectives, shared accountability, collegiality, and collaboration.

The understanding of these objectives will allow an administrator to recognize the characteristics of teacher behaviors that create and sustain a student centered learning environment.

The timed-writing sample takes place at the Human Resources Office. The candidate is given a prompt to respond to within 30 minutes. The writing sample is screened by a staff member of the Human Resources Department for the thoroughness of the writing sample in responding to the prompt.

The Future Administrators Workshop involves four sessions during which current administrators explain what the suburban school district looks for in its administrators. These four sessions are each two hours in duration and cover a variety of topics. The topics include, but are not limited to, effective resume writing; the professional dress-code of a school-based administrator, and the benefits, challenges, and expectations of being a school-based administrator.

The school principal is provided with a professional development team that coaches the school based principal through the training process. This team is called a Leadership Development Team.

#### *Organization and Function of the Leadership Development Team*

The Leadership Development Team consists of the director of the Elementary School Leadership Development Program, a consulting principal, and a mentor who is currently an elementary school principal. The Leadership Development Team's mission statement states, *the mission of the Leadership Development Team is to:* "collaborate with all school district offices to implement the Administrative & Supervisory Professional Growth System [that] ensures a highly effective administrator in every position and increase student achievement. Additionally, the vision is to have a highly effective school principal who is: visionary; and an instructionally focused leader; process-oriented; collaborative; culturally competent; committed to continuous improvement; ethical and politically astute, thereby ensuring high achievement for every student." (MCPS, 2013).

The members of the Leadership Development Team for the elementary school level are the school principal, a community superintendent or director of school performance, and a mentor who is an elementary school principal. The elementary school principal is considered the primary trainer and is responsible for observing, meeting with, and supporting the candidate in his or her activities. The principal consults with and approves of the candidates' professional development plan (PDP) and provides supervisory activities that support the implementation of the professional development plan. The principal also provides a wide variety of experiences that will enable the candidate to learn and demonstrate the skill set needed for an elementary school principal. "In

effect, [the principal] can move the candidate from being a novice problem solver to [an] expert problem solver through the development of reflective thinking” (Hart, 1990, p). Additionally, the principal evaluates the candidate as part of their mid-year and end-of-the year performance with input from the development team.

Another member of the development team is a director of school performance. The director attends the developmental team meetings and provides the candidate with a broad perspective of school and district issues. The director of school performance also serves as a resource for answering questions and giving strategies to build the leadership competencies that will expand the skill set and strengthen the skills of the candidate. This is very important for the candidate especially in a professional development setting, a supervisor of school principals has the opportunity to play a pivotal role in leading [the candidate] towards a deeper understanding of self, work roles, and performance (Griffith & Frieden, 2000; Lee & Barnett, 1994). Additionally, the director also observes the candidate and schedule times to shadow and observe the candidate in providing professional feedback for the development and growth of the candidate’s skill set.

The final member of the team is the training representative, who serves as a mentor. This team member is a current Assistant Principal or Principal who has been assigned by the Office of Organizational Development (OOD). The mentor ensures that the expectations for each meeting are met and that appropriate evaluations are completed for the candidate. The mentor provides consultation to the candidate at the end of each meeting and maintains the materials that are to be handed into the department of Organizational Development at the end of the year. The Mentor, is a supportive, non-evaluative when working with a candidate. The Mentor also plans a separate monthly meeting where the mentor observes and provides feedback to the candidate about his or her progress toward obtaining the skills required for school-based leadership.

The Leadership Development Team (LDT) functions as a reviewer of the specific assignments that must be prepared and presented to the development team at scheduled monthly meetings throughout each year of the program. At these meetings, the development team members encourage the developing school leader to reflect about new information and the ideas that challenge and push the candidate to think and grow, while using the expertise of the Leadership Development Team Members and their experiences as a guide.

The Leadership Development Team (LDT) has meetings that are designed to allow the candidate an opportunity to use a fraction of his or her time to step away from the day-to-day operations of being a school-based leader and examine the persistent school challenges for which there are no easy answers.

Additionally, the candidate attends monthly leadership seminars as a part of the professional development opportunities available from the school district. The seminars allow the candidate to participate in collegial groups within an environment of cohort members. While participating in the various skill building activities, the candidate is able to analyze case studies and critical incidents, discuss and suggest changes to ideas, and consult with one another concerning school-based incidents that occur on a regular basis. It is very important that this discourse occurs as a result of the questioning [that the candidate can have amongst themselves to receive ideas and clarification of their on the job experiences]. The creating of opportunities to be reflective with colleagues with the expansion of critical thinking through follow-up questions or probes (Lee & Barnett, 1994). Consequently, it is noted that “powerful reflection and collaboration is also possible when [Principals] engage in professional dialogue with each other in small groups (Rich & Jackson, 2006).

### *The Process of the Leadership Development Program*

After a candidate is selected to participate in the training program and has completed successful years of administrative training, he or she is assigned to a school with an identified need for a Principal Intern. The Principal Intern assumes all of the duties and responsibilities of being an administrator including participation in the professional development-training program. The training program is designed to provide needed on-the job experiences, training for the role as an administrator, and the use of development team meetings to assist with gaining the skills needed in order to become an effective leader.

The beginning of the training program for the Principal Intern occurs during the summer months. The monthly professional development training sessions occur throughout the school year that is designed to increase the knowledge and improve the skills of the Principal Intern within the framework of the Instructional Framework for School-Based Administrators. The experiences provided during the on-the-job experiences are designed to develop desired leadership skills. The principal of the school is the primary trainer for the principal intern. The principal spends time with the principal intern in processing the daily operations of the school. These encounters are designed to raise the Principal Intern's level of awareness about issues confronting the school. To accomplish this, the principal shares his or her insights with the principal intern, along with the history behind the situations in order to provide a platform that allows the principal intern to question the different avenues that could have taken place in order to resolve each situation. It is intended that each principal will provide his or her principal intern with a wide variety of leadership experiences that will enable the candidate to become an Elementary School Principal.



The Leadership Development Program (LDP) also includes quarterly development team meetings during which the Principal Intern shares his or her experiences and learning's as an administrator with the developmental team members through the presentation of portfolio materials that the candidate has prepared. The portfolio demonstrates progress with the on-the-job experiences and the level of mastery of the Administrative Standards. Assessments occur throughout the school year to determine if he or she demonstrates improved proficiency of skills in most of the Administrative and Supervisory Standards.

The purpose of these developmental team meetings is to encourage the developing school leader to reflect on new information and the ideas that challenge and push him or her to think and grow while using the expertise of the Leadership Development Team members and their experiences as a guide. This tool, which is known as reflection, provides a pathway by which new learning occurs. Therefore, "since reflection is a primary catalyst for developing expertise in problem-solving (Barnett, 1995), the implications are that problem-solving cannot occur without reflective thinking. Therefore, in order to supervise effectively, the reflection should be cultivated (Rich & Jackson, 2005).

## **SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study was prompted by the need for a greater understanding of the training elementary school principals received through the school district's Leadership Development Training Program. The review of literature substantiates the point that the role of the principalship has evolved in recent years. As the role of the principalship has moved from being managerial to that of instructional leader within an era of increased accountability, many researchers have questioned the effectiveness of traditional university-based training programs. Research studies suggest that

many programs are grounded in theory and do not provide efficient practicum experiences for aspiring administrators.

According to The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010), the need for quality principals will increase by 12% by the year 2014. This growth is largely the result of current principals retiring. Therefore, it is logical that school districts are taking a more active role in creating programs that will allow them to employ highly qualified administrators. The literature suggests that training programs must operate within a set of clear standards. Once such set of standards is the ISLLC standards. The ISLLC performance standards includes an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation and stewardship of a vision of learning. This person will promote success for all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program that is conducive for student learning. In addition, instructional leaders are thought to manage the daily operations of the schools, collaboration with families and community members, and act with integrity, and fairness. Additionally, principal preparation programs forge university partnerships, practicum experiences, and on the job training.

The central purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of Elementary School Principals and their Leadership Development Program effects of one school district's effort to create and constantly improve their leadership development program for elementary school principals. This research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to deal with school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement?

2. What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to work with teachers and others to design and implement a system for continuous student achievement?
3. What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum, and instructional practices?
4. What are elementary school principals' overall perceptions of their leadership development training program?

The conceptual framework of Thomas Glass (2003), which was used to guide this study, and detailed research methods will be outlined in chapter three.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of elementary school principals who have completed a Leadership Development Training Program. This chapter includes a description of the following areas: research questions, research design, instrumentation, location of the study, procedures, data collection, and the analysis of data, credibility and trustworthiness.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study examined the perceptions of Elementary School Principals who have completed an Elementary Leadership Development Training Program designed to prepare them for the role of principal. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to deal with school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement?
2. What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to work with teachers and others to design and implement a system for continuous student achievement?
3. What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum, and instructional practices?
4. What are elementary school principals' overall perceptions of their leadership development training program?

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

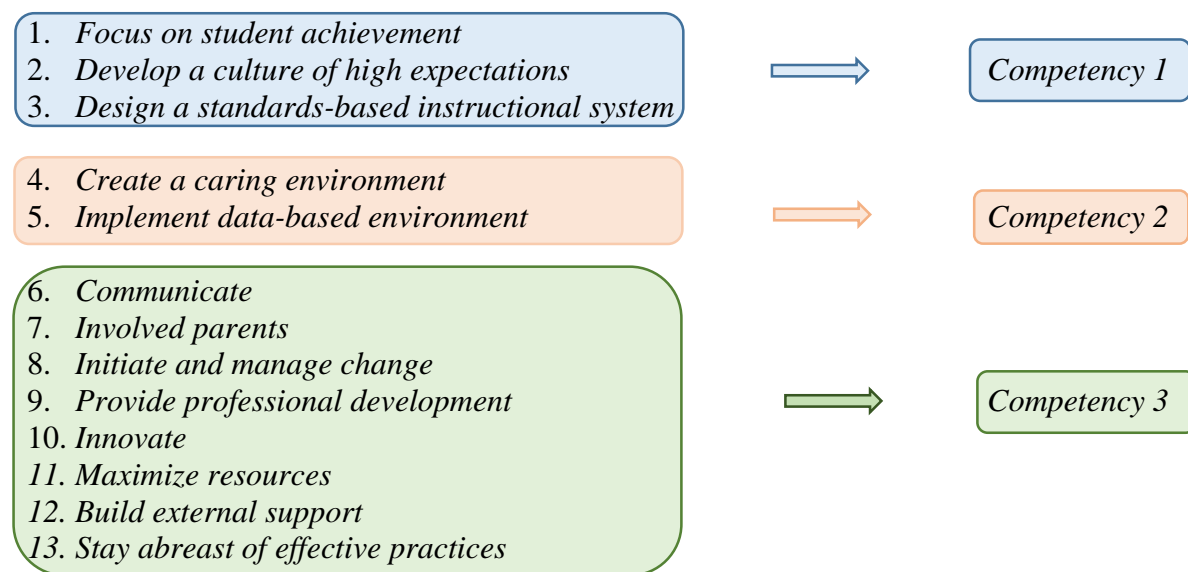
Data was collected using a quantitative approach. In this study, a quantitative approach allowed for feedback to be gathered to provide a clearer understanding of elementary school principals' perceptions of their leadership training. The study was designed to examine the perceptions of elementary principals who have completed a Leadership Development Training Program. The data was gathered through a survey that measured the perceptions of program participants about their Leadership Development Training Program. The survey was entitled, The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Survey of Principal Internship Programs (Glass, 2003). The survey allowed the researcher to identify patterns in participants' perceptions of the Leadership Development Training Program. Specifically, quantitative methods allowed for comparisons of perceptions across various cohorts that participated in the Leadership Development Training Program and began Elementary Principals' within the Suburban West School District.

## **INSTRUMENTATION**

The theoretical framework of Glass (2003) guided this research project, and the survey instrument based on Glass' work was used for quantitative data collection. Glass developed the *SREB Internship Survey* to assess the skills and preparation of Principal Interns. He focused on three competencies that were identified by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) as critical components that effective principals should have. According to Glass, these components contribute to effective school principals. The three competencies include: (1) A comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement; (2) The ability to work with teachers and others to design and implement a system of continuous student achievement; and (3) The ability to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound

curriculum and instructional practices. The three competencies were used as the research questions driving this study as they are considered the major components that contribute to effective school principals.

Glass (2003) further developed the three competencies into 13 practitioner-validated Critical Success Factors that effective principals employ to improve schools and increase student achievement (SREB, 2001& 2003). The critical success factors and their alignment with the three competencies are as follows:



Glass' (2003) survey instrument had 13 areas that correlate with 36 activities that are associated with SREB's Critical Success Factors (Appendix A). The responses were coded using a Likert scale. Respondents indicated the level in which they were involved in and understood the activities associated with building their capacity as principals. The perceptions of the principals were measured on a continuum from not at all (i.e., 1=strongly disagree) to frequently (i.e., 4=strongly agree). Therefore, a low score would indicate a weak self-assessment of one's leadership behavior, and a high score would represent a strong self-assessment of one's leadership

behaviors. Table 1 below illustrates the categories of the questions and their correlation to the research questions of this study.

Table 1

Critical Success Factors and Their Relationship to Survey and Research Questions

Category (Critical Success Factors)	Survey Questions	Research Question
Mission and Vision to improve higher achievement	#6a; #6b; #6c; #6d	#1
High expectations for all students to learn high-level content	#7a; #7b; #7c	#1
Implementation of good instructional practices that motivate and increase student achievement	#8a; #8b; #8c; #8d; #8e; #8f; #8g	#1
Create an organization where faculty and staff support every student	#9a; #9b; #9c; #9d	#2
Data used to initiate and continue improvement in school and classroom practices and student achievement	#10a; #10b	#2
Informed and focused on student achievement	#11a; #11b	#2
Partnerships with parents in the student's education and create a structure for collaboration	#12	#3
Leadership and facilitation skills to manage effectively	#13a; #13b; #13c	#3
Meaningful change through quality sustained professional development	#14a; #14b	#3
Organize and use time in innovative ways to meet the goals and objectives of school improvement	15a; #15b	#3
Acquire and use resources wisely	#16a; #16b	#3
Obtain support from central office and from community and parent leaders for school improvement	#17a; #17b	#3
Abreast of new research and proven practices	#18a; #18b	#3
Rating of program	#19	#4

## LOCATION OF STUDY & PARTICIPANTS

### *Suburban West School District*

This study was conducted in the Suburban West School District. The school district has a population of over 149,000 students. The elementary school students in this district total about 67,000 students. The demographics for this school district are as follows: 15.4% of students are enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, 33.2% qualify for a Free and Reduced-Price Meals System (FARMS), and 10.9% of students are classified as Special Education.

The school district has a Board of Education comprised of elected members responsible for educational policy-making, including policies related to the Leadership Development Programs. The board members are elected for a four year term along with a student elected board member. The Board of Education is responsible for the operations of the school system and the monitoring of the local educational expenditures from county, state, and federal sources. The Board of Education monitors the implementation of the strategic plan for the school district.

### *Participants*

Participants for this study were Elementary School Principals who had completed the Elementary Leadership Development Program and the Principal Internship in the Suburban West School District.

The survey instrument was electronically sent to all participants. At the end of the survey, participants were asked to give an overall rating of their principal training program experiences. The ratings were as follows: poor, acceptable, good, and excellent.



## **DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

The researcher first requested permission from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Suburban West School District to conduct the study. Upon receiving permission, the researcher sent the following items electronically to potential participants: (1) a letter stating the purpose of the study and requesting their participation, (2) the informed consent text and (3) the procedures for completing the survey. The respondents were provided a link to the online survey through a website engine and data collection program titled Survey Monkey. The electronic survey included a consent statement, and a recruitment letter explaining the purpose of the study, the procedures for completing the survey, and the participants' confidentiality rights. Participants were given the option to agree to the informed consent terms and they were free to leave the survey site at any time without negative ramifications.

Survey Monkey was a tool that enabled the development of the survey and the ability to gather data through an electronic medium. Survey Monkey allowed the researcher to gain information from groups and/or individuals, and filter their responses. In addition, the system provided the researcher with the ability to download the results into a database. There was also an email option that allowed the researcher to create a distribution list of participants, create an email message to the participants, schedule a delivery time for participants to receive messages, and track the data provided by the respondents. Survey Monkey also had the capacity to track the respondents who had not completed the survey and provide them with a reminder.

According to Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen (2004), surveys are "one of the most important data collection tools available in evaluation" (p. 341). This benefit to the research is the evaluating of outcomes of the program and investigating whether or not there are differences in the perspectives of different cohort groups.

## **ANALYSIS OF DATA**

A qualitative approach was used to analyze the data of this study. The use of a quantitative method provided detailed feedback. In the quantitative phase, data was gathered with the use of a survey to answer the research questions. The survey instrument was provided to the participants who had agreed to be a part of the research study. Responses for each respective survey was placed into SPSS and used to test the survey reliability, chart the demographics of the participants, and to calculate correlations.

## **SUMMARY**

This chapter delineated the process that was used to complete this research study regarding the perceptions of Elementary School Principals of a Leadership Development Training Program. The chapter began with a description of the research design and the problem that was being investigated and concluded with an overview of the instrumentation, research questions, location of study and participants, and data collection procedures.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**FINDINGS**  
**INTRODUCTION**

As the school improvement process has changed in order to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner, so has the role of the elementary school principal. The role of the elementary school principal as an instructional leader evolved beyond school manager into a leader who provides a conducive learning environment; collaboration amongst school staff; the analysis of data; and a focus on increased student achievement. In order to ensure that elementary school principals are successfully achieving these goals, school systems across the nation have created leadership development training programs that prepare principals for this new set of responsibilities. The leadership development training program, “should put more emphasis on instructional leadership, do a better job of integrating theory and practice, and provide better preparation in working effectively with the school community. They should also offer internships with hands on leadership opportunities” (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007).

The purpose of this study was to determine the elementary school principals’ perception of how well their leadership development training program prepared them to successfully manage their duties as the leader-of-the school. Glass’ (2003) survey was used to measure the elementary school principal’s perceptions. The survey instrument had 13 questions that correlated with 36 activities that are associated with SREB’s critical success factors. For each critical success factor, the respondents were asked to evaluate the activities that provided the leadership experiences of theory and practice with hands-on experiences in their leadership development training program. The various activities provided opportunities to apply and extend their knowledge and skills through practice in a “school setting.”

Data was gathered from elementary principals through an online survey. The data was then analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients).

### Data Collection

Upon receiving approval of the dissertation proposal by the research committee, the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and the school district in which this study took place, the researcher disseminated the *Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB) Internship Survey* to 133 elementary school principals within the Suburban West School District. Of the 133 elementary school principals a total of 61 surveys were returned. Fifteen of the 61 surveys were excluded, creating an N of 46. The 15 surveys were excluded from the study based on one or more of the following reasons following reasons.

1. The respondent noted that they did not receive their training in the county being studied.
2. The respondent is currently employed as a middle school or high school principal
3. The respondents omitted or skipped five or more questions on their survey rendering it incomplete.

This study examined one school district's leadership development training program that used innovative components such as research based content; curricular coherence, field based internships; problem-based learning strategies; cohort structures and mentoring and coaching (Stanford Study, 2007, & The Wallace Foundation, 2013) that the research deemed would develop skilled leaders who are able to create a learning environment that is conducive for staff and students towards academic achievement for all students.

The researcher's intent with the survey was to find out the perceptions of the elementary school principals who had participated in their district's leadership development training program. This data can then be used to provide modifications and/or enhancements to the existing elementary leadership development training program in order to better meet the needs of elementary school principals in preparing for their leadership responsibilities.

The following items were sent electronically to potential participants: a letter stating the purpose of the study and requesting their participation, the informed consent form, and the procedures for completing the survey. The respondents were provided a link to the online survey that they could access and complete the survey. By reading the material provided by the researcher to the potential participants and the participants 'clicking' on the link to access and complete the survey, the participants were providing the researcher with informed consent of survey completion.

The study was conducted to answer the following questions:

1. What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to deal with school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement?
2. What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to work with teachers and others to design and implement a system for continuous student achievement?
3. What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum, and instructional practices?

4. What are elementary school principals' overall perceptions of their leadership development training program?

This section of the chapter provides the descriptive data representing the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The principals were asked to rate their perception of how well their leadership development program prepared them to effectively lead a school guided by the SREB Critical Success Factors that are represented by 36 field experiences.

*Demographics of Participants*

The survey was sent to a total of 133 elementary school principals. A total of 65 principals responded to the survey. After eliminating incomplete surveys and those completed by principals currently serving in middle and high schools, a total of 46 surveys were used in this study. With a return rate of 34.5%, the percentage of people responding to the survey was aligned with the average response rate for online surveys (Nutly, 2008).

The demographic data are presented to identify the personal characteristics of the respondents, as well as to help understand their differences. The participants represented 45 principals who participated in a leadership development program in the Suburban West School District.

As seen in Table 2 below, 32 of the 46 (69.6%) elementary principals in this study identified themselves as female, while 13 (28.3%) identified themselves as male. The results indicate that the majority of participants were age 36 and over. According to the data, 37% of the principals were between 56-66 years of age and 34.7% ranged between 36-45 years of age. The smallest group, represented by only 4.3% of participants, had ages equal to or under 35.

While the sample population was heavily skewed towards higher ages, the opposite is true in terms of their years of experience. More than half of the participants in the study had less than

10 years of experience working as a principal. The largest percent of respondents (34.8%) had between 0-5 years of experience while 30.4% had between 6-10 years of experience. The sample included only two principals with over 25 years of experience, representing 4.4% of participants.

Table 2.

*Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Characteristics*

Descriptive Variables	Characteristics	Number	Percentages
Gender	Female	32	69.6%
	Male	13	28.3%
	Omission	1	
Years of Experience as a principal	0-5 years	16	34.8%
	6-10 years	14	30.4%
	11-15 years	10	21.7%
	16-20 years	4	8.7%
	21-25 years	1	2.2%
	Over 25	1	2.2%
Age of Principal	35 and under	2	4.3%
	36-45	16	34.8%
	46-55	8	17.4%
	56-66	17	37.0%
	67 and over	3	6.5%

Of the 46 respondents, 32 participated in training between 2005 and 2014. The remaining 14 participated in training between 1986 and 2004, with the bulk of respondents (N=9) in the 2000-2004 cohorts.

## Survey Reliability

For this study of elementary school principal's perceptions about their own leadership development training program, the researcher analyzed the perceptions of the elementary principals on the total scale and on each of the subscales on the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Principal Internship Survey. SPSS version 21.0 was used to calculate inferential and descriptive statistics.

Cronbach's alpha was computed to check for the reliability estimates for the sample of 32 elementary school principals who participated in the elementary leadership development training program from during the years of 2005-2014 in this study. Cronbach's alpha is used to measure inter-item reliability and consistency of the survey instrument. It is used when no pretest-posttest reliability measures are available. Cronbach's alpha was computed on all thirty-six field experiences that the elementary school principals were asked to assess. According to Tavakol & Dennick (2011), a measure is considered to have acceptable reliability and internal consistency is acceptable from .70 to .95. Despite the weak reliability on the elementary principal's field experience within two areas: (1) Participating in Authentic Assessments for Students and (2) Participating on Task Forces for Literacy and Numeration scales, Cronbach's alpha scores were consistent suggesting the original scale may need further adjustments when working with elementary school principals. Ringberg et al (2009) even suggested that one particular item on this scale yielded lower intra-class correlation (similarity between items in the same subscale) for item 11, 12, and 13. Which may account for the low Cronbach's alpha score that was yielded on the critical success factor question that corresponded to Transitional Activities for Students subscale (due to item 14) in the current study. Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha results suggest that the question should be eliminated as an item from the subscale. However, most scales had moderate to strong reliability in elementary school principals' perceptions. The areas with moderate to



strong ratings were: Instructional Practices, Student Support, Data, and Management. According to Ringenberg (2004) the alpha coefficient analysis for this study sample indicated that the reliability of the total scale ranged from “modest” to “strong” for the majority of the critical success factors.

Following the demographic questions, the 36 items that related to the field experiences as identified by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Internship Survey (Appendix) which was developed by Glass (2003), were presented to the participants. Each item asked the elementary school principals to consider their leadership development field experiences when reviewing statements describing the tasks associated with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Internship Survey. For example, the first item stated, “In your field experience, how often did you work with teachers to implement curriculum that produces gains in student achievement as defined by the mission of the school.” Respondents indicated their respective opinions about each of the 36 items by clicking on one of four responses on a Likert scale: *Frequently, Often, Sometimes, and Never*.

The SREB items were calculated by their frequency: “frequently,” “often,” “sometimes,” and “never.” Each of the items on the SREB Survey is designed to explore the field experiences of the elementary school principal in the areas of Mission and Vision, High Expectations, Instructional Practices, Student Support, Data, Student Achievement, Management, Professional Development, School Improvement, Resources, Central Office Support, and Research. The descriptive data displayed below in Table 3 shows that most of the Cronbach alpha-coefficients computed for this study are well above .70 indicating that the overall survey showed strong relationship between the different variables. The exception to that statement for elementary principals is the Transitional Activities for Students who matriculate from the elementary school to the secondary level construct which was a trivial construct.

Table 3

*Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Principal Internship for the Critical Success Factors*

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Alpha-Coefficients</b>
Mission & Vision (Items #6a; #6b; #6c; #6d)	.81	$X = 3.26$	2.22	$\alpha$ (Total) = .74
High Expectations (Items #7a; #7b; #7c)	.60	$X = 2.89$	1.74	$\alpha$ (Total) = .56
Instructional Practices (Items #8a; #8b; #8c; #8d; #8e; #8f; #8g).	1.19	$X = 2.92$	4.23	$\alpha$ (Total) = .81
Student Support (Items #9a; #9b; #9c; #9d)	1.12	$X = 3.05$	2.98	$\alpha$ (Total) = .85
Data (Items #10a; #10b)	.19	$X = 3.67$	1.03	$\alpha$ (Total) = .83
Student Achievement (Items #11a; #11b)	.52	$X = 3.17$	1.11	$\alpha$ (Total) = .34
Management (Items #13a; #13b; #13c)	.59	$X = 3.20$	1.99	$\alpha$ (Total) = .82
Professional Development (Items #14a; #14b)	.42	$X = 2.94$	1.65	$\alpha$ (Total) = .75
School Improvement (Items 15a; #15b)	.18	$X = 3.09$	1.31	$\alpha$ (Total) = .73
Resources (Items #16a; #16b)	1.29	$X = 2.29$	1.37	$\alpha$ (Total) = .54
Central Office Support (Items #17a; #17b)	.61	$X = 5.15$	1.64	$\alpha$ (Total) = .76
Research (Items #18a; #18b)	.44	$X = 5.26$	1.68	$\alpha$ (Total) = .74

### *Research Question 1*

The first research question examined principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to deal with school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement. Respondents answered a total of 13 questions that were broken down into three key categories; mission & vision, high expectations, and instructional practices to motivate students. For each question respondents were asked to rank how often their training allowed them to gain experience in the aforementioned areas. Responses were calculated for each

individual question. Questions pertaining to the same category were grouped and later tallied, allowing for a cumulative score for each category and an overall score for the area.

As seen in Table 4 below, more than two thirds of respondents felt that their training gave them ample experience in creating a mission and vision to improve higher achievement. The results for the higher expectations category were slightly different. Close to 40% of respondents suggested that they had few opportunities that prepared them to lead with high expectations and only 23.2% of principals reported frequently having field experience that prepared them to lead with high expectations. Of the three categories, a larger number of respondents reported a lack of field experience that trained them to implement good instructional practices that motivate and increase student achievement. With a total of 40 negative responses, 12.4% of the sample suggested that they never had any field experience in the aforementioned area. In contrast, 23.3% of respondents reported frequently having experiences related to good instructional practices. Overall, participants had rather positive perceptions about the ability of their training program to prepare them to deal with school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement. In regards to all 13 questions related to this area, 31.6% of participants felt that their training frequently allowed afforded them the opportunity to develop skills that would help them deal with school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement. In contrast, only 7.9% of respondents felt that they never had field experience that prepared them in this area.

Table 4

<b><u>Research Question #1:</u></b>				
What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to deal with school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement?				
<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
	%	%	%	%
<b>Mission and Vision to improve higher achievement</b>	4 2.2%	49 26.6%	54 29.3%	77 41.8%
<b>High expectations for all students to learn high-level content</b>	7 5%	45 32.6%	54 39.1%	32 23.2%
<b>Implementation of good instructional practices that motivate and increase student achievement</b>	40 12.4%	82 25.5%	95 29.6%	94 29.3%
<b>Overall Score</b>	51 7.9%	176 27.4%	213 33.1%	203 31.6%

### *Research Question 2*

The second research question examined principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to work with teachers and others to design and implement a system for continuous student achievement. Respondents answered a total of 8 questions that were broken down into three key categories; faculty and staff support, data, and informed focus on student achievement. Following Glass' (2003) survey design, the questions were grouped because collectively they highlight how well principals were prepared to work with a team to design a system for continuous student achievement. For each question respondents were asked to rank how often their training allowed them to gain experience in the aforementioned areas. Responses

were calculated for each individual question. Questions pertaining to the same category were grouped and later tallied, allowing for a cumulative score for each category and an overall score for the area.

Data from Table 5 (below) shows that more than 60% of principals felt that their training program often to frequently gave them experiences that prepared them to work with faculty to design and implement a system for continuous achievement. More than half of the respondents (57.5%) noted that they frequently were given opportunity to use student data to inform school and classroom practices. According to the data, 70.2% of participants reported that they often or frequently experienced fieldwork in the various categories related to this area.

Table 5

<b><u>Research Question #2:</u></b> What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to work with teachers and others to design and implement a system for continuous student achievement?				
<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b>Never</b> <i>n</i> %	<b>Sometimes</b> <i>n</i> %	<b>Often</b> <i>n</i> %	<b>Frequently</b> <i>n</i> %
<b>Create an organization where faculty and staff support every student</b>	13 9.3%	44 24.0%	58 31.7%	64 35.9%
<b>Data used to initiate and continue improvement in school and classroom practices and student achievement</b>	0 0%	17 18.5%	22 23.9	53 57.5%
<b>Informed and focused on student achievement</b>	1 1.0%	30 32.6%	32 34.8%	29 31.5%
<b>Overall Score</b>	14 3.8%	91 24.8%	112 30.5%	146 39.8%

### *Research Question 3*

The third research question examined principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum, and instructional practices. Respondents answered a total of 14 questions that were broken down into seven key categories; partnership with parents, leadership & facilitation skills, professional development, school improvement, resources, support from central office, and research & proven practices. For each question respondents were asked to rank how often their training allowed them to gain experience in the aforementioned areas. Responses were calculated for each individual question. Questions pertaining to the same category were grouped and later tallied, allowing for a cumulative score for each category and an overall score for the area.

In comparison to survey participants' responses to research questions 1 and 2, a larger number of participants reported that they never experienced fieldwork that would prepare them to provide the necessary support to staff and carry out sound school, curriculum, and instructional practices. These ratings were most prevalent in the following categories: using resources, research & proven practices, support from central office, and professional development. According to the data from Table 6 (below) 29.3%, 18.5%, 17.6% and 10.9% of respondents respectively said that their training never included field experiences in these categories. Moreover, in three of the categories; resources, support from central office, and research & proven practices, greater than 50% of respondents noted that they had no or little training in these areas.

Table 6

<b>Research Question #3:</b> What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum, and instructional practices?				
<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b>Never <i>n</i> %</b>	<b>Sometimes <i>n</i> %</b>	<b>Often <i>n</i> %</b>	<b>Frequently <i>n</i> %</b>
Partnership with parents in the student's education and create a structure for collaboration	0 0%	10 22.2%	19 42.2%	16 35.6%
Leadership and facilitation skills to manage effectively	6 4.3%	31 22.5%	52 37.7%	49 35.5%
Meaningful change through quality sustained professional development	10 10.9%	24 26.1%	33 35.9%	25 27.2
Organize and use time in innovative ways to meet the goals and objectives of school improvement	1 1.1%	30 32.6%	39 42.4%	22 23.9%
Acquire and use resources wisely	27 29.3%	29 31.5%	24 26.1%	12 13.0%
Obtain support from central office and from community and parent leaders for school improvement	16 17.6%	36 39.6%	26 28.3%	13 14.3%
Abreast of new research and proven practices	17 18.5%	33 35.9%	28 30.4%	14 15.2%
<b>Overall Score</b>	77 12.9%	173 29.0%	221 37.0%	151 25.3%

#### *Research Question 4*

The fourth research question asked principals to give an overall rating for their leadership development program. As seen in the Table 7 (below), the majority of participants ranked their training program in the good to excellent range with 15.2% and 58.7% percent of the sample

respectively. Likewise a little over ¼ of the sample felt the training was satisfactory while no one ranked it unsatisfactory.

Table 7

<b><u>Research Question #4:</u></b> What are elementary school principals' overall perceptions of their leadership development training program?				
<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b> <i>n</i> %	<b>Satisfactory</b> <i>n</i> %	<b>Good</b> <i>n</i> %	<b>Excellent</b> <i>n</i> %
Rating of the program		12 26.1%	7 15.2%	27 58.7%

### Summary

This chapter presented the findings associated with the study. Quantitative methods were used to address the four research questions. A number of recommendations for practice and for further research were drawn from these findings and are presented in Chapter V, as are conclusions as an outcome of this study.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter consists of four sections: research questions, findings of the study, conclusions, and recommendations. The research questions and findings frame the major issues that led to this research inquiry. It includes the purpose of the study, the problem statement, research questions, and methodology. Based on the findings, the researcher includes recommendations for further leadership development for principals and the extension of the research.

This study examined the perceptions of elementary school principals who participated in one school district's leadership development program. This developmental program is a fundamental piece designed to lead to great leadership and the ability to provide a conducive learning environment which fosters a culture for student achievement.

The conceptual framework of this study focused on the perceptions of the participants in the leadership development training program and their practices. The theoretical framework provided by Glass asserts that there are three competencies that are critical for effective principals: a comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement; the ability to work with teachers and others to design and implement a system of continuous student achievement; and the ability to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound curriculum and instructional practices.

This study used a quantitative method to obtain pertinent insights and possible solutions to the research questions. One hundred and thirty three elementary principals were surveyed from one school district who had participated in the district's leadership development training program. A total of 46 completed surveys were returned and used in this study.

The researcher used the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Internship Survey (2003), based on the 3 critical domains, as a lens to view the leadership capacity of the elementary school principals. Using this research instrument, the researcher solicited the responses of the principals through the use of an electronic medium. The survey allowed the researcher to identify patterns in participants' perceptions of the Leadership Development Training Program. Specifically, the use of a quantitative method allowed for comparisons of perceptions of current elementary school principals who participated in the Leadership Development Training Program.

### Research Questions

Prior to beginning the research, the following research questions were developed to provide the structure for data collection and analysis.

#### *Research Question #1*

What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to deal with school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement?

#### *Research Question #2*

What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to work with teachers and others to design and implement a system for continuous student achievement?

*Research Question #3*

What are elementary school principals' perceptions about how well their leadership development program prepared them to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum, and instructional practices?

*Research Question #4*

What are elementary school principals' overall perceptions of their leadership development training program?

This study used a descriptive statistical methodology. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data. Other methods of statistical analysis used included Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients.

The SREB Critical Success Factors are the dependent variables for this quantitative study. This study had 13 dependent variables: (1) Mission & Vision, (2) High Expectations, (3) Instructional Practices, (4) Student Support, (5) Data, (6) Student Achievement, (7) Management, (8) Professional Development, (9) School Improvement, (10) Resources, (11) Central Office Support, (12) Research, and (13) Collaboration of parents & staff. The elementary leadership development program served as the independent variable through the use of the SREB Survey.

## Conclusions Based on Quantitative Results

### *Research Question 1*

The first research question examined principal's perceptions on how well their leadership development program prepared them to deal with school and classroom practices. The survey revealed that most of the respondents (71%) felt that their field experience prepared them to work with the mission and vision of the school in order to improve the higher achievement of others. The principals reported that they often or frequently had the ability to work with teachers to implement the curriculum in order to produce gains; were provided with opportunities to work with other administrators to develop, define and/or adapt best practices to increase student achievement with the use of current research; and that they were able to use a variety of strategies to analyze and evaluate the quality of instructional practices that led to increased student achievement. According to Portin (2009) instructional leadership "requires principals to be consummate team builders who can shape a vision of success for all students, cultivate leadership in others, help teachers upgrade their skills, and use data to foster school improvement (p.7)." Aligned with the literature, the Suburban West School District values these practices are demonstrated by the fact that a large number of principals reported having field experience and training in these areas.

It was clear from the principals' responses that professional development opportunities in the area of curriculum development are strongly valued as well. With this knowledge base, principals are able to produce a more conducive learning environment for all students. D. Domenech (2012) acknowledged these same findings suggesting, "Today, there is a growing

consensus that principals must do much more, notably ensuring the spread of effective instructional practices into every classroom (p.7).”

Overall, participants had rather positive perceptions about the ability of their training program to prepare them to deal with school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement. Multiple studies point to three broad sets of leadership practices that positively impact student learning and consequently form the new paradigm of successful school leadership:

- Setting direction – articulating a vision for shared organizational purpose, setting high-expectations and monitoring performance;
- Developing people – creating stimulating opportunities and providing models of effective practice and individual support; and
- Redesigning the organization – strengthening the culture of the school and modifying organizational structure and practices as needed to achieve the shared vision of effective teaching and learning (Mitgang & Maeroff, 2008, p.2).

Respondents noted having several experiences that overlap the leadership practices listed above. In regards to training principals to deal with school and classroom practices, the Suburban West School District prepared principals by giving them varied experiences that dealt with the mission and vision of schools, creating high expectations for all learners, and implementing good institutional practices.

### *Research Question #2*

The second research question examined the principal’s perception about how well the leadership development program prepared them to work with teachers and others to design and

implement a system for continuous student achievement. This question focused on providing a training program where faculty and staff understand that every student counts and where every student has the support of a caring adult. “Top-notch training programs [should] prepare future principals to make teaching and learning everyone’s top priority,” (Gill, 2012, p.26). Gill (2012) asserts that it is essential for leaders to learn how to coach teachers, plan the proper professional development for them and use data to identify and support student’s needs.

Educational researchers have pointed to the recent trend for data driven schools. “By improving skills related to collecting, analyzing, and interpreting student assessment data, teachers [and administrators] will be potentially better equipped to adjust their instruction to accommodate the needs of individual students” (US Department of Education, 2011, p. xi). The findings from this study further suggest that importance of having administrators who use data to drive instruction. The category of data was the only one on the survey in which more than half (57.5%) of respondents said that they frequently had field experience in this area. Moreover, 81.4% reported that they were often or frequently trained to use data while no one reported never having training in this area. These field experiences gave the respondents the opportunity to analyze data to develop and refine instructional activities and experience the disaggregation of data for use by faculty and other stakeholders.

Closely aligned with data driven schools is an informed focus on student achievement. “Principals need to understand where their school is relative to the State Accountability target, how their teachers assess for learning and monitor student progress, and how they use data to adjust instruction based on student needs” (mdk12.org, 2014, para 4). A total of 66.3% of participants reported that they often or frequently had field experience that focused on student achievement. Research supports these findings by stating that the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century principal requires

them to develop a deep understanding of how students learn and at what levels they need to learn (Fry, O'Neill, and Walker, 2007).

The last category in this area was faculty and staff support. Fry et al. (2007) report that schools “must have principals who can provide teachers with the leadership and support they need to help students gain the skills and knowledge now identified as important for success in a ‘flat’ world filled with uncertainty and constant change (iii).” Participants’ responses demonstrated how much the Suburban West District values principals who focus on faculty and staff support. A total of 67.6% of principals reported having often or frequently receiving training in this area.

### *Research Question #3*

The third research question examines the principal’s perception about how well their leadership development program prepared them to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum, and instructional practices. The survey findings revealed that all respondents were either frequently or often able to have field experiences that allow the participants to work in meaningful relationships with faculty and parents. It is important to note that the majority of the respondents believed that their training provided them with the opportunity to work with faculty and staff in professional development activities. Similarly, participants noted that they had field experiences that frequently and often gave them the opportunity to participate in study groups, problem solving sessions and/or on-going meetings to promote student achievement. This effective managing allows the structure of collaboration to exist; quality professional development; the wise use of resources; the incorporation of research to improve instructional practices; and the ability to obtain support from central office and the community for

school improvement. The survey data further reports that 75% of respondents believed that they could build a learning community as a result of their leadership development training program.

#### *Research Question #4*

Research question number four asked the elementary principals about their overall perception of being equipped as an aspiring principal with the knowledge and skills needed to perform the leadership functions and task that are required for their job as a result of the leadership development training program. The responses by the participants indicate that over 76% of them felt that the program was either excellent (56.86%) or good (19.61%). Additionally, 23.53% noted that the program was satisfactory. The findings for this research question underscore the fact that this preparation program have corroborating factors that are preparing principals to be instructional leaders who have a huge impact on student achievement. The overall perception, as a result of the responses from the survey, supports the notion that the leadership development training program “trains principals to develop and evaluate curricula, use data to diagnose student needs, coach teachers, plan professional development in their schools, and establish school-wide norms that support high-quality teaching and learning” (Mitgang & Maeroff, 2008, pgs. 1-11).

#### Recommendations for Practice

Although survey respondents had positive overall scores for their training program, there were four key areas in which the principals felt they were not properly trained; grant writing, scheduling to maximize student learning, work with professional groups and external organizations, and involvement in literacy and numeracy tasks. Based on these results, the researcher would make the following recommendations.



- Develop targeted training to assist principals with grant writing and methods to increase external funding.
- Incorporate district level training on master scheduling to maximize classroom instructional time for student learning.
- Engage collaboratively with all community partners to build a self-renewing learning community focused on student achievement.
- Provide access to training for literacy and numeracy task forces.

By having the above mentioned experiences, elementary principals will be able to increase their knowledge base of school and classroom practices that would assist them in increasing student achievement for all students.

#### Recommendation for Further Research

The results of this study provided information that can be used to further develop a leadership training program that is currently developing elementary principals who feel that they are equipped to become an instructional leader. However, further research in this area could enhance the current program.

Recommendations for further study are as follows:

Recommendation #1. It is recommended that a study be conducted in the Suburban West School District to determine whether there is a difference in the perceptions of program

participants based upon demographic variables including race, gender, age, and academic background.

Recommendation #2. It is recommended that a replicated study using a qualitative approach to probe the top 3 areas to improve the current leadership development training program.

Recommendation #3: It is recommended that a study should be replicated within the next 3-5 years to determine if the participants have changed their view of the leadership development program and compare what changes have occurred that represent the change in view.

Recommendation #4: It is recommended that this study should be replicated at the secondary level using the same research instrument to determine if any of the perceptions from this study are mirrored at the secondary level.

### Closing Summary

This dissertation examined the perceptions of elementary principals' perceptions of how their leadership preparation program helped them to develop the skills and gain the knowledge necessary to be successful instructional leaders who have a major impact on student achievement. The results of this study indicated that the vast majority of principals felt that their field experiences adequately prepared them to work with the mission and vision of the school in order to improve the higher academic achievement of students. Professional development opportunities in the area of curriculum development allowed principals to create a more conducive learning environment for all students.

Moreover, the study revealed that the principal's gained a greater understanding of how to collect, analyze, and interpret data which drove the decision-making process for student achievement. Collaboration was a key indicator and necessary in the building of a learning community that supported instructional practices, school improvement, parent involvement, and support from central office.

A common theme that has emerged from this study was that "...if we are to realize the goal of ensuring educational excellence and equity for all children, we must first recognize that our work is fundamentally interdependent. None of our organizational or individual activities operate within a vacuum. Rather, we are constantly affecting each other and preparation of school leaders." (Brooks, Harvard, Tatum, & Patrick, 2010, p. 423).

The results of this study can be used by school districts, colleges of education, and policymakers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their principal preparation programs in an effort to gain a better perspective on how to train aspiring school leaders who will one day lead America's schools.

## APPENDIX A

### Principal Internship Survey

#### *Directions for Responding*

This survey is intended to gather your opinion about the elementary leadership development training program that you participated in. For the purpose of this study, field experience is defined as school-based experiences and/or training while you were a principal intern.

1. Please answer the demographic questions below. How many years have you been a principal?
2. Your Gender: Male or Female?
3. Your Age:
  - a. 35 and under
  - b. 36-45
  - c. 45-55
  - d. 56- over.
4. Ethnicity:
  - a. African American
  - b. Asian
  - c. Caucasian
  - d. Hispanic
  - e. Native American
  - f. Other:

If you selected other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**The following questions are directly related to your principal leadership training program.**

**Response Key**

Never: You never had this experience while serving as a principal intern.

Sometimes: You experienced this less than 10 times as a principal intern.

Often: You experienced this on a monthly basis as a principal intern.

Frequently: You experienced this on a weekly basis as a principal intern.

**6. School leaders are able to create a focused mission to improve student achievement and a vision of the elements of school, curriculum and instructional practices that make higher achievement possible. In your field experience how often did you....**

		<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
6a.	...working with teachers to implement curriculum that produces gains in student achievement as defined by the mission of the school				
6b.	...working with the administration to develop, define and/or adapt best practices based on current research that supports the school's vision.				
6c.	...working with faculty to develop, define, and/or adapt best practices, based on current research, that support the school's vision.				

6d.	...assisting with transitional activities for students as they progress to higher levels of placement (e.g., elementary to middle).				
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7. **School leaders are able to set high expectations for all students to learn high-level content. In your field experience how often did you....**

		<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
7a.	...developing/overseeing academic recognition programs that acknowledge and celebrate student's success at all levels of ability.				
7b.	...activities resulting in raising standards and academic achievement for all students and teachers.				
7c.	...authentic assessments of student work through the use and/or evaluation of rubrics, end-of-course tests, projects.				

8. **School leaders are able to recognize and encourage implementation of good instructional practices that motivate and increase student achievement. In your field experience how often did you....**

		<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
8a.	...using a variety of strategies to analyze and evaluate the quality of instructional practices being implemented in a school.				
8b.	...working with teachers to select and implement appropriate instructional strategies that address identified achievement gaps.				
8c.	...working on a school team to prioritize standards and map curriculum in at least one content area across all grade levels of the school.				
8d.	...working with a group of teachers to unwrap adopted standards and develop assignments and assessments aligned with the standards.				
8d.	...working with a group of teachers to unwrap adopted standards and develop assignments and assessments aligned with the standards.				
8e.	...working with a school team to monitor implementation of a [core] curriculum.				



8f.	...involvement in the work of literacy and numeracy task forces.				
8g.	...working with curriculum that is interdisciplinary and provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge in various modalities across the curriculum.				

- 9. The school leader is able to create a school organization where faculty and staff understand that every student counts and where every student has the support of a caring adult. In your field experience how often did you....**

		<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
9a.	...working with staff to identify needs of all students.				

9b.	...collaborating with adults from within the school and community to provide mentors for all students.				
9c.	...collaborating in activities designed to increase parental involvement.				
9d.	...engaging in parent/student/school collaborations that develop long-term educational plans for students.				

**10. The school leader is able to use data to initiate and continue improvement in school and classroom practices and student achievement. In your field experience how often did you....**

		<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
10a.	...analyzing data (including standardized test scores, teacher assessments, psychological data, etc.) to develop/refine				

	instructional activities and set instructional goals.				
10b.	...facilitating data disaggregation for use by faculty and other stakeholders.				

**11. The school leader is able to keep everyone informed and focused on student achievement. In your field experience how often did you....**

		<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
11a.	...analyzing and communicating school progress and school achievement to teachers, parents, and staff.				
11b.	...gathering feedback regarding the effectiveness of personal communication skills.				

**12. The school leader is able to make parents partners in their student's education and create a structure for parent and educator collaboration. In your field experience how often did you....**

		<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
12a.	...working in meaningful relationships with faculty and parents to develop action plans for student achievement.				

**13. The school leader is able to understand the change process and have the leadership and facilitation skills to manage it effectively. In your field experience how often did you....**

		<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
13a.	...working with faculty and staff in professional development activities.				
13b.	...inducting and/or mentoring new teaching staff.				
13c.	...building a “learning community” that includes all stakeholders.				

**14. The school leader is able to understand how adults learn and knows how to advance meaningful change through quality, sustained professional development that benefits students. In your field experience how often did you....**

		<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
14a.	...study groups, problem-solving sessions and/or ongoing meetings to promote student achievement.				
14b.	...scheduling, developing and/or presenting professional development activities to faculty				

	that positively impact student achievement.				
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**15. The school leader is able to organize and use time in innovative ways to meet the goals and objectives of school improvement. In your field experience how often did you....**

		<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
15a	...scheduling of classroom and/or professional development activities in a way that provides meaningful time for school improvement activities.				
15b	...scheduling time to provide struggling students with the opportunity for extra support (e.g., individual tutoring, small-group instruction, extended-block time) so that they may have the opportunity to learn to mastery.				

**16. The school leader is able to acquire and use resources wisely. In your field experience how often did you....**

		<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
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16a	...writing grants or developing partnerships that provide needed resources for school improvement.				
16b	...developing schedules that maximize student learning in meaningful ways with measurable success.				

**17. The school leader is able to obtain support from central office and from the community and parent leaders for their school improvement agenda. In your field experience how often did you....**

		<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
17a	...working with faculty to communicate with school board and community stakeholders in a way that supports school improvement.				
17b	...working with faculty, parents, and community to build collaboration and support for the school's agenda.				

**18. The school leader is able to continuously learn and seek out colleagues who keep them abreast of new research and proven practices. In your field experience how often did you....**

		<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
18a	...working with faculty to implement research-based instructional practices.				
18b	...working with professional groups and organizations.				

## APPENDIX B

A Copy of the Original Survey that was developed in 2003.

### The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Internship Survey Instrument

(The Internship Survey of the SREB Leadership Initiative, The Principal Internship: How Can We Get It Right?)

#### Definition of Key Terms for SREB Survey

**Field Experience:** School-based experiences that engage the student in observing, participating or leading, as described in the Response Key.

#### Response Key:

**NR Not Required:** Education Leadership Student does not have the opportunity for involvement in the activity or the activity is not a part of the field experiences.

**O Observing:** Education Leadership Student has the opportunity to watch the activity without any active involvement in the activity.

**P Participating:** Education Leadership Student has the opportunity to join and share in activities and decision-making that may result from the activity.

**L Leading:** Education Leadership Student has the opportunity to plan, direct and develop activities and oversee decision-making that may be required by, or result from, the activity.



*Directions for Responding*

For each item, check all responses (you may check more than one) that reflect the practices followed in your program. Be sure to read the numbered, boldface statement for each section of the survey before responding to the items in that section.

- (NR) Not Required    No opportunity for involvement is offered nor is the activity part of Field experiences.
- (O) Observing        has the opportunity to watch activity without any active involvement.
- (P) Participating    has the opportunity to join/share in the activity and decision-making resulting from it.
- (L) Leading          has the opportunity to plan, direct and develop activities and oversees decision-making that may be required by or result from the activity.

**CHECK ALL BOXES THAT APPLY**

- 19. School leaders are able to create a focused mission to improve student achievement and a vision of the elements of school, curriculum and instructional practices that make higher achievement possible.**

Field experiences require

		<b>(NR)</b>	<b>(O)</b>	<b>(P)</b>	<b>(L)</b>
1a.	...working with teachers to implement curriculum that produces gains in student achievement as defined by the mission of the school				
1b.	...working with the administration to develop, define and/or adapt best practices based on current research that supports the school's vision.				
1c.	...working with faculty to develop, define, and/or adapt best practices, based on current research, that support the school's vision.				
1d.	...assisting with transitional activities for students as they progress to higher levels of placement (e.g., elementary to middle).				

**20. School leaders are able to set high expectations for all students to learn high-level content.**

Field experiences require

		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
2a.	...developing/overseeing academic recognition programs that acknowledge and celebrate student's success at all levels of ability.				
2b.	...activities resulting in raising standards and academic achievement for all students and teachers.				
2c.	...authentic assessments of student work through the use and/or evaluation of rubrics, end-of-course tests, projects.				

**21. School leaders are able to recognize and encourage implementation of good instructional practices that motivate and increase student achievement.**

Field experiences require

		<b>(NR)</b>	<b>(O)</b>	<b>(P)</b>	<b>(L)</b>
3a.	...using a variety of strategies to analyze and evaluate the quality of instructional practices being implemented in a school.				
3b.	...working with teachers to select and implement appropriate instructional strategies that address identified achievement gaps.				
3c.	...working on a school team to prioritize standards and map curriculum in at least one content area across all grade levels of the school.				
3d.	...working with a group of teachers to unwrap adopted standards and develop assignments and assessments aligned with the standards.				
3d.	...working with a group of teachers to unwrap adopted standards and develop assignments and assessments aligned with the standards.				
3e.	...working with a school team to monitor implementation of a [core] curriculum.				

3f.	...involvement in the work of literacy and numeracy task forces.				
3g.	...working with curriculum that is interdisciplinary and provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge in various modalities across the curriculum.				

**22. The school leader is able to create a school organization where faculty and staff understand that every student counts and where every student has the support of a caring adult.**

Field experiences require

		<b>(NR)</b>	<b>(O)</b>	<b>(P)</b>	<b>(L)</b>
4a.	...working with staff to identify needs of all students.				

4b.	...collaborating with adults from within the school and community to provide mentors for all students.				
4c.	...collaborating in activities designed to increase parental involvement.				
4d.	...engaging in parent/student/school collaborations that develop long-term educational plans for students.				

**23. The school leader is able to use data to initiate and continue improvement in school and classroom practices and student achievement.**

Field experiences require

		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
5a.	...analyzing data (including standardized test scores, teacher assessments, psychological data, etc.) to develop/refine instructional				

	activities and set instructional goals.				
5b.	...facilitating data disaggregation for use by faculty and other stakeholders.				

**24. The school leader is able to keep everyone informed and focused on student achievement.**

Field experiences require

		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
6a.	...analyzing and communicating school progress and school achievement to teachers, parents, and staff.				
6b.	...gathering feedback regarding the effectiveness of personal communication skills.				

**25. The school leader is able to make parents partners in their student's education and create a structure for parent and educator collaboration.**

Field experiences require

		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
7a.	...working in meaningful relationships with faculty and parents to develop action plans for student achievement.				

**26. The school leader is able to understand the change process and have the leadership and facilitation skills to manage it effectively.**

Field experiences require

		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
8a.	...working with faculty and staff in professional development activities.				
8b.	...inducting and/or mentoring new teaching staff.				
8c.	...building a “learning community” that includes all stakeholders.				

**27. The school leader is able to understand how adults learn and knows how to advance meaningful change through quality, sustained professional development that benefits students.**

Field experiences require

		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
9a.	...study groups, problem-solving sessions and/or ongoing meetings to promote student achievement.				
9b.	...scheduling, developing and/or presenting professional development activities to faculty that positively impact student achievement.				



**28. The school leader is able to organize and use time in innovative ways to meet the goals and objectives of school improvement.**

Field experiences require

		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
10a	...scheduling of classroom and/or professional development activities in a way that provides meaningful time for school improvement activities.				
10b	...scheduling time to provide struggling students with the opportunity for extra support (e.g., individual tutoring, small-group instruction, extended-block time) so that they may have the opportunity to learn to mastery.				

**29. The school leader is able to acquire and use resources wisely.**

Field experiences require

		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
11a	...writing grants or developing partnerships that provide needed resources for school improvement.				
11b	...developing schedules that maximize student learning in meaningful ways with measurable success.				

**30. The school leader is able to obtain support from central office and from the community and parent leaders for their school improvement agenda.**

Field experiences require

		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
12a	...working with faculty to communicate with school board and community stakeholders in a way that supports school improvement.				
12b	...working with faculty, parents, and community to build collaboration and support for the school's agenda.				

**31. The school leader is able to continuously learn and seek out colleagues who keep them abreast of new research and proven practices.**

Field experiences require

		(NR)	(O)	(P)	(L)
13a	...working with faculty to implement research-based instructional practices.				
13b	...working with professional groups and organizations.				

## APPENDIX C

Table B (Tesch, 1990, pp. 142-149).

Steps:	What Needs To Be Done At This Step:
1.	Get a sense of the whole. Read all the transcriptions carefully. Perhaps jot down some ideas as they come to mind as you need.
2.	Pick one document (i.e., one interview)-the most interesting one, the shortest, the one on the top of the pile. Go through it, asking yourself, "What is this about?" Do you think about the substance of the information but its underlying meaning? Write thoughts in the margin.
3.	When you have completed this task for several participants, make a list of all topics. Cluster together similar topics. From these topics into columns, perhaps arrayed as major, unique, and leftover topics.
4.	Now take this list and go back to your data. Abbreviate the topics as codes and write the codes next to the appropriate segment of the text. Try this preliminary organizing scheme to see if new categories and codes emerge.
5.	Find the most descriptive wording for your topics and turn them into categories. Look for ways of reducing your total list of categories by grouping topics that relate to each other. Perhaps draw lines between your categories to show interrelationships.
6.	Make a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and alphabetize these codes.
7.	Assemble the data material belonging to each category in one place and perform a preliminary analysis.
8.	If necessary, recode your existing data.

## APPENDIX D

### **ISLLC Standards**

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards have recently been developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers in collaboration with the National Policy Board on Educational Administration (NPBEA) to help strengthen preparation programs in school leadership (Van Meter & Murphy, 1997). The Program in Educational Leadership uses the ISLLC standards as a requirement for the student's [Learning Portfolio](#).

There are six standards. Each standard is followed by the *Knowledge* required for the standard and the *Dispositions*.

**Standard 1:** A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

#### **Knowledge**

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- learning goals in a pluralistic society
- the principles of developing and implementing strategic plans
- systems theory
- information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies
- effective communication
- effective consensus-building and negotiation skills

#### **Dispositions**

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- the educability of all
- a school vision of high standards of learning
- continuous school improvement
- the inclusion of all members of the school community
- ensuring that students have the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become successful adults.
- A willingness to continuously examine one's own assumptions, beliefs, and practices
- Doing the work required for high levels of personal and organization performance.

**Standard 2:** A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

### **Knowledge**

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- student growth and development
- applied learning theories
- applied motivational theories
- curriculum design, implementation, evaluation, and refinement
- principles of effective instruction
- measurement, evaluation, and assessment strategies
- diversity and its meaning for educational programs
- adult learning and professional development models
- the change process for systems, organizations, and individuals
- the role of technology in promoting student learning and professional growth
- school cultures

### **Dispositions**

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- student learning as the fundamental purpose of schooling
- the proposition that all students can learn
- the variety of ways in which students can learn
- lifelong learning for self and others
- professional development as an integral part of school improvement
- the benefits that diversity brings to the school community
- a safe and supportive learning environment
- preparing students to be contributing members of society

**Standard 3:** A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

### **Knowledge**

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- theories and models of organizations and the principles of organizational development
- operational procedures at the school and district level
- principles and issues relating to school safety and security

- human resources management and development
- principles and issues relating to fiscal operations of school management
- principles and issues relating to school facilities and use of space
- legal issues impacting school operations
- current technologies that support management functions

### **Dispositions**

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- making management decisions to enhance learning and teaching
- taking risks to improve schools
- trusting people and their judgments
- accepting responsibility
- high-quality standards, expectations, and performances
- involving stakeholders in management processes
- a safe environment

**Standard 4:** A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

### **Knowledge**

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- emerging issues and trends that potentially impact the school community
- the conditions and dynamics of the diverse school community
- community resources
- community relations and marketing strategies and processes
- successful models of school, family, business, community, government and higher education partnerships

### **Dispositions**

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- schools operating as an integral part of the larger community
- collaboration and communication with families
- involvement of families and other stakeholders in school decision-making processes
- the proposition that diversity enriches the school
- families as partners in the education of their children
- the proposition that families have the best interests of their children in mind

- resources of the family and community needing to be brought to bear on the education of students
- an informed public

**Standard 5:** A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

### **Knowledge**

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- the purpose of education and the role of leadership in modern society
- various ethical frameworks and perspectives on ethics
- the values of the diverse school community
- professional codes of ethics
- the philosophy and history of education

### **Dispositions**

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- the ideal of the common good
- the principles in the Bill of Rights
- the right of every student to a free, quality education
- bringing ethical principles to the decision-making process
- subordinating one's own interest to the good of the school community
- accepting the consequences for upholding one's principles and actions
- using the influence of one's office constructively and productively in the service of all students and their families
- development of a caring school community

**Standard 6:** A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

### **Knowledge**

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- principles of representative governance that undergird the system of American schools
- the role of public education in developing and renewing a democratic society and an economically productive nation
- the law as related to education and schooling
- the political, social, cultural and economic systems and processes that impact schools

- models and strategies of change and conflict resolution as applied to the larger political, social, cultural and economic contexts of schooling
- global issues and forces affecting teaching and learning
- the dynamics of policy development and advocacy under our democratic political system
- the importance of diversity and equity in a democratic society

### **Dispositions**

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- education as a key to opportunity and social mobility
- recognizing a variety of ideas, values, and cultures
- importance of a continuing dialogue with other decision makers affecting education
- actively participating in the political and policy-making context in the service of education
- using legal systems to protect student rights and improve student opportunities



## APPENDIX E

Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008 as adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) on December 12, 2007.

### Standard 1

An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.

#### Functions:

1. Collaboratively develop and implement a shared vision and mission.
2. Collect and use data to identify goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and promote organizational learning.
3. Create and implement plans to achieve goals.
4. Promote continuous and sustainable improvement.
5. Monitor and evaluate progress and revise plans.

### Standard 2

An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

#### Functions:

1. Nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations.
2. Create a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program.
3. Create a personalized and motivating learning environment for students.
4. Supervise instruction.
5. Develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress.
6. Develop the instructional and leadership capacity of staff.
7. Maximize time spent on quality of instruction.
8. Promote the use of the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning.
9. Monitor and evaluate the impact of the instructional program.

### Standard 3

An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Functions:

1. Monitor and evaluate the management and operational systems.
2. Obtain, allocate, align, and efficiently utilize human, fiscal, and technological resources.
3. Promote and protect the welfare and safety of students and staff.
4. Develop the capacity for distributed leadership.
5. Ensure teacher and organizational time is focused to support quality instruction and student learning.

### Standard 4

An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Functions:

1. Collect and analyze data and information pertinent to the educational environment.
2. Promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community's diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources.
3. Build and sustain positive relationships with families and caregivers.
4. Build and sustain productive relationships with community partners.

### Standard 5

An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Functions:

1. Ensure a system of accountability for every student's academic and social success.
2. Model principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior.
3. Safeguard the values of democracy, equity, and diversity.
4. Consider and evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision-making.

5. Promote social justice and ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling.

#### Standard 6

An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

#### Functions:

1. Advocate for children.
2. Act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning.
3. Assess, analyze and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies.

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